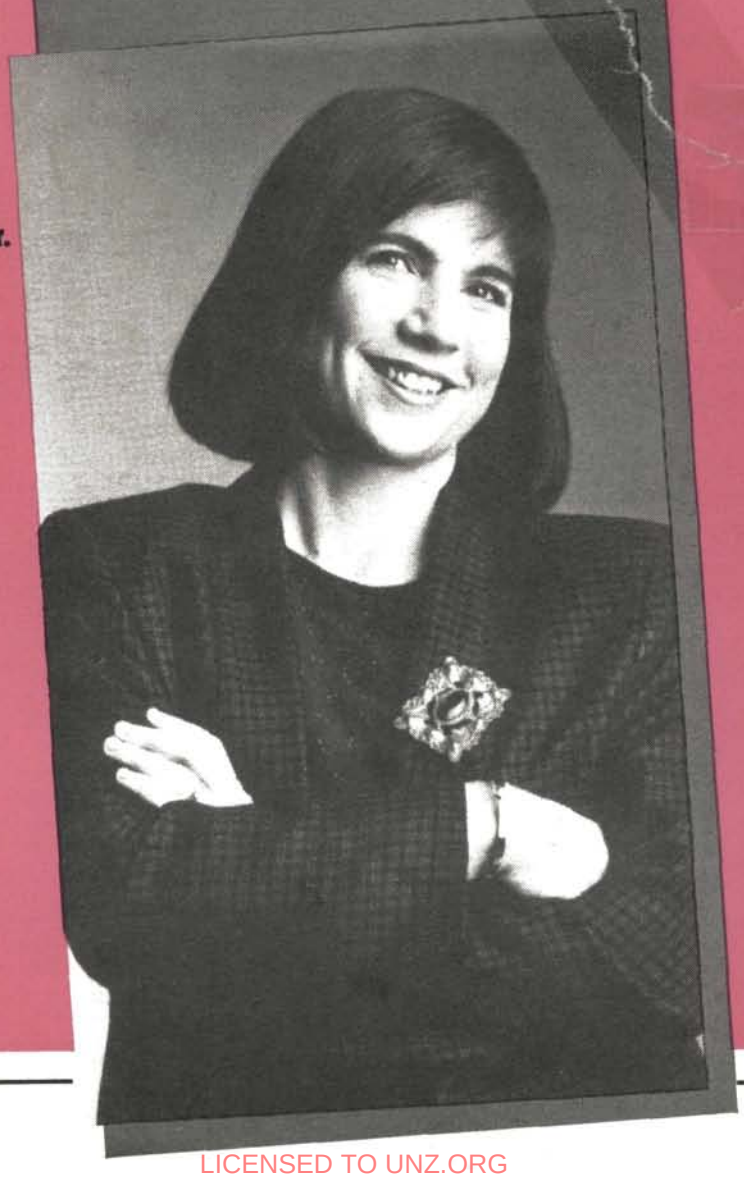
St. Charles Seminary Library
Carthagena, Ohio

$2.00 February 14, 1992

COMMONWEAL

QUINDLEN: FROM THE '60s TO THE '90s

Alexander M. Santora



Notebook:
ROBERT G. HOYT

Where's the party?
[illegible] CARLIN, Jr.

[illegible]ll that

[illegible]HY

[illegible]. RULE
[illegible]lic
[illegible] of

[illegible]D

[illegible]& Bugsy

[illegible]D
[illegible]S

[illegible]NELL
[illegible] shows

Art:
LEE SIEGEL on Thomas Eakins

BOOKS

MARK PATRICK HEDERMAN on Bernard Shaw

WILSON CAREY McWILLIAMS on Gertrude Himmelfarb's Poverty and Compassion

CHRISTOPHER LASCH "Struggles for Justice"

PAUL ELIE "Foolscap"

CHRISTOPHER A. SHANNON "Unquiet Days"

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM "Systematic Theology"

**********3-DIGIT 458
CW 00079972
ST CHARLES SEMINARY
LIBRARY 9222
CARTHAGENA STA
CELINA OH 45822

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

Wading in deeper

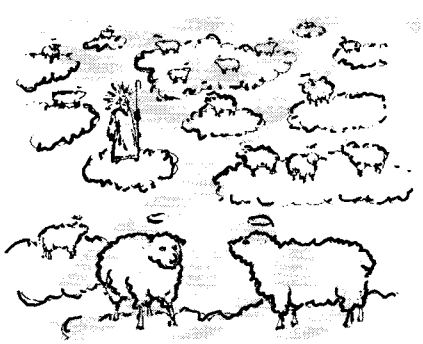
New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: It is hard not to concur with *Commonweal*'s contention that the prolife movement is presented incompletely and unfairly in the media. Nonetheless, there are many outside the media who are wholly persuaded that *Roe* v. *Wade* was a just decision, the Magna Carta of women's rights, and many others who have their doubts about it, but who also have doubts about how to change it. Thus, controlling abortion is not a matter only of a change in the law; it is even more a question of change in the hearts and minds of people who support *Roe*, not all of whom are strident, dogmatic, or blindly prejudiced.

Dealing with *Roe*, then, requires justices whose scholarship and probity are beyond challenge. The wide-ranging social changes initiated by the Warren Court were accepted as well as they were in large part because the men who formed that Court had earned their seats and had demonstrated both the magnanimity and the degree of objectivity one has a right to demand of a judge. I would agree that they blew it on *Roe* v. *Wade*, that the decision, to echo Mary Ann Glendon, canonizes the right to privacy with little regard for the parallel obligation of the polity to cherish life.

Nevertheless, it is those who most want *Roe* reversed or limited who should be most distressed by Bush's appointees. This Court will surely modify the law, but that change will do little to limit abortions, for its ruling will have been promulgated by a stacked Court—at least two of whose members, Souter and Thomas, are on it for no other clearly discernible reason. How can Clarence Thomas, with his woefully limited judicial experience, his youth, and his scanty scholarship, do much to persuade anyone that *Roe* v. *Wade* is bad law? How can the Court persuade the people that strictures they place upon the right to abortion are in the interest of justice when they burden only the poor? How can a Court which refused to hear the substantive plea of a man on death row because his out-of-state lawyers, unversed in the intricacies of Virginia law, filed the appeal three days too late, make anyone believe that when they limit *Roe* v. *Wade*, they do so out of respect for human life?

MARIAN BURKHART



"Of course I'm familiar with the expression 'The Lord is my shepherd,' but it never occurred to me to take it literally."

Haiti's silent shepherds

Arlington, Va.

To the Editors: I read with interest the "Report on Haiti" [December 6, 1991] by John P. Hogan and Bruce MacDonald. As a former associate director of the Washington Office on Haiti, an advocacy group on behalf of Haiti's voiceless, I have followed events there closely. As your writers suggest, it is a shame that Haiti's episcopal conference lacks the cohesion and political will to condemn the coup leaders and the atrocities which, according to the most recent estimate by the Organization of American States, have taken more than 1,500 lives in this latest and bloodiest chapter of Haiti's sad history.

This is especially so since the transition to democracy owes a singular debt to the courageous lay workers in the "Ti Kominite Legliz" (TKL), which has empowered a new generation among the impoverished Haitian masses. Messrs. Hogan and MacDonald are correct in reporting that the poor are quite willing to endure the hemisphere-wide embargo, the only nonviolent point of leverage that can force the regressive forces now in power to negotiate an agreement to bring Father Aristide back to Haiti as president. Would that the Haitian bishops would indicate a willingness to suffer with their flock.

JOHN KOZYN

Theologies of growth

Okemos, Mich.

To the Editors: For many years I have been a subscriber to *Commonweal*, grateful for the critical and appreciative posture you and your writers have taken with regard to religion and society.

With real reluctance, I am not renewing my subscription or my advocacy of your publication within my range of public contacts. I do this because of your failure to address assiduously the problem of controlling the inordinate growth of the world's population, "one of the two central determinants of the planet's future" (Jessica Mathews, vice-president of World Resource Institute).

Your year's-end index for 1991 bears out my critical observation. The Vatican position on the question of population control is one thing, but how *Commonweal*, with its record of speaking in a prophetic voice, can be so insensitive in this regard is a question that I hope you will someday face forthrightly. This would make your distinguished journal again worthy of informed religious and secular readership.

TRUMAN A. MORRISON, JR.

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional offices. Copyright © 1992 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $36; Canada, $39; foreign, $41. Special two-year rate: U.S., $62; Canada, $66; foreign, $72. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illus: Cover, Antonucci; p. 2, Punch; p. 8, Leung; p. 11, *New York Times*; p. 12, Charlot; pp. 14, 16, 19, Valerry; p. 17, Ross; p. 22, left, Yale Univ. Art Gallery, bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark; p. 22, right, The Phillips Collections, Washington, D.C.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMONWEAL

CONTENTS

Volume CXIX, Number 3

Correspondence 2
Editorials 3
Notebook: *Robert G. Hoyt* 4
Torture for a healer: *Jennifer Reidy* 5
Where's the party?: *David R. Carlin, Jr.* 6
1492 & all that: *Abigail McCarthy* 7

Anna Quindlen: from the '60s to the '90s: *Alexander M. Santora* 9
Where does it end?: *James B. Rule* 14
Screen: *Richard Alleva* 17
Poetry: *Bruce Drucker* 18
Media: *Frank McConnell* 18
Stage: *Gerald Weales* 19
Art: *Lee Siegel* 20

BOOKS

Bernard Shaw: *Mark Patrick Hederman* 23
Poverty and Compassion: *Wilson Carey McWilliams* 24
Struggles for Justice: *Christopher Lasch* 25
Foolscap: *Paul Elie* 27
Unquiet Days: *Christopher A. Shannon* 28
Systematic Theology: *Lawrence S. Cunningham* 30

STAFF

Editor: Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
Managing Editor: Patrick Jordan
Associate Editor: Paul Baumann
Production Editor: Jacqueline Dowdell
Senior Writer: Robert G. Hoyt
Movies: Richard Alleva
Stage: Gerald Weales
Poetry: Rosemary Deen
Columnists: John Garvey, J. Bryan Hehir, Abigail McCarthy, David R. Carlin, Jr.
Staff: Harriette Balsky, Carmen Alava, Pamela Quatse
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly, except monthly Christmas, New Year's and July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, Me. 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 15 Dutch St. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

And they're off

Voters in New Hampshire are about to kick off the 1992 presidential primary season. New Hampshire Republicans can register a protest against President George Bush by voting for the nationalistic, if not xenophobic, Patrick Buchanan. Among the Democrats little is predictable. Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton has been anointed the frontrunner by the media, but his history of amorous indiscretion may prove insuperable, despite the dignified support of his wife. Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey, whose Congressional Medal of Honor promised to immunize him against Republican attacks on liberal timidity in foreign policy, is intelligent and personable enough, but unseasoned. Tom Harkin, the aggressive populist senator from Iowa, preaches the old-time New Deal gospel with fervid conviction. If that fabled coalition of the working and middle class is lying dormant waiting only for a cheerleader, Harkin has yet to rouse them. Jerry Brown and Paul Tsongas round out the field.

We live in fractious times. It is hard to decide what is more depressing, George Bush's grim warning that he will do "what I have to do to be reelected," or the spectacle of Democratic nominees falling all over each other to endorse *Roe* v. *Wade*. President Bush has seen his popularity plummet as the economy stubbornly refuses to come out of recession. He has guided the nation during the lowest period of growth since the end of World War II. Worse, an emerging consensus among economists warns that the economy is in long-term decline. For many Americans this recession threatens to resist any mere cyclical improvement. The globalization of the economy, the loss of well-paying manufacturing jobs, and the crisis of American schooling suggest that dramatic political action is needed to galvanize the nation. We are in trouble! Yet we seem bereft of the political will needed for the task.

A decade of Reaganism has left the nation deeply polarized. Urged on by Ronald Reagan's anti-government rhetoric, Americans are content to pursue narrow and inevitably self-defeating agendas. State governments from California to New Jersey and Connecticut, faced with unprecedented costs and social obligations, are reeling under the ferocious resistance of their taxpayers. Suburbanites want nothing to do with the cities or the poor, cities regard the countryside as unused landfill, government employees think taxpayers are selfish, taxpayers think government employees are spendthrifts and lazy. Threaded throughout these antagonisms, of course, is the explosive question of race.

Democrats, who need to make a strong case for government activism based on an appeal to common values, are in a weak position. Reagan cynically succeeded in curtailing federal spending on social programs by cutting income taxes and piling up the national debt, thus handcuffing federal spending for the foreseeable future—and beyond. A significant portion of the social welfare burden has shifted to the states,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with predictably dire consequences. Homelessness, street violence, unemployment, and the health crisis have reached epidemic levels in some cities. States cannot cope; unlike the federal government, they must balance their budgets. You cannot spend on social programs and balance your budget during a recession without raising taxes. Democrats are learning the hard way—ask Governor Jim Florio of New Jersey—that regardless of how equitably the burden is distributed, Americans do not trust government to spend money in ways that will solve the encircling problems of drugs, violence, and dysfunctional schools.

This cynicism and frustration favor the Republican attack on government and taxes. Even with Republicans, led by President Bush, calling for dramatic reductions in military spending, the prospect is slim that voters will endorse any significant transfer of funds to social programs aimed solely at the disadvantaged. Sadly, no Democratic nominee has reimagined the political center in a way that truly threatens the Republican lock on the presidency. Ronald Reagan's success was built on the ritualistic, indeed the narrative nature of presidential politics. He had a story to tell that helped Americans make sense of their lives, and he famously stuck to his script. A Democrat whose vision or personality can compete with the residual power of Reaganism has yet to appear.

Politics is the art of balancing conflicting, and often irreconcilable interests. To engage Bush in a significant debate about the future of America, Democrats must gain the trust of voters who are deeply suspicious of Democrat claims on behalf of the have-nots. Voters must be persuaded before they can be recruited, and to be persuasive the loyal opposition will need to create a "narrative" that has a power greater than the sum of its political grievances against the status quo. In this regard, we suggest the nominee pay attention to Wilson Carey McWilliams (p. 24) and Christopher Lasch (p.25). State intervention is no substitute for "the informal understandings that hold a community together," Lasch writes. "Casual public trust [rests] on the mediating structures (family, churches, neighborhoods) that encourage trust." Democrats have abandoned these issues to the Republicans for too long. Abortion rights, economic regulation, and tax reform must all take a backseat to the repair of these "informal understandings."

More specifically, Democrats must recognize that the problem of taxes is the problem of welfare and the poor, and that its resolution cannot be simply economic. "Dignity involves giving as well as getting, and it includes being held to standards and responsibilities which are within reach but stretch the muscles," McWilliams writes. In providing for the poor we must also make reasonable demands upon them—for work, schooling, and yes, sexual responsibility. This will do two things. First, by imposing behavioral standards common to all citizens it will acknowledge the rightful place of the poor as equals, a place that Reaganism has obscenely ridiculed. Second, establishing a sense of shared moral purpose will forge a cultural and political bond between many Americans who now see their lives as utterly separate, if not opposed. This is the wedge issue Democrats need if they hope to create a new presidential majority. An egalitarian civic life built on a sense of common moral obligations remains a powerful American idea. Democrats should preach it with all their heart and soul.

NOTEBOOK

THE CATHOLIC CONSCIENCE

MOVING TO THE NEXT PARISH?

Subterraneously (that is, by phone), someone in this office learned from someone in another office about a suburban parish in another region of the country that has found itself serving a number of refugees. They don't come to the rectory asking for jobs, clothes, food, money, or help in getting green cards. They come to the church for Mass, and (presumably) they *give* money. They aren't from Haiti or El Salvador but from a neighboring parish, and they are fleeing not from death squads but from a couple of newly appointed curates who are gung ho on *Humanae vitae* and who regularly assure the assembled People of God that if they practice contraception they must not receive the Eucharist. One such refugee, a woman with more years, more education, and (I think) more sense than the curates, told our informant, "I'm not going to be lectured by some twenty-five-year-old about contraception, and he's not going to tell me when I can go to Communion."

Should this woman, and her ilk, be deported back to their original parish? Well, they're not just economic refugees looking for a handout. If they're forced to go back they face a reasonable likelihood of continued aural torture. It's unlikely that their tormentors will ever repent (presumably, the curates are just repeating what they were taught in their postpostconciliar seminary). Nor will the persecutors be brought to justice; there is no independent judiciary. I say: Let the refugees enjoy their refuge.

And let them count their blessings: Their parish is not in the diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, currently pastored by Bishop Glennon Flavin. A pastoral letter issued by Bishop Flavin in October of last year (and published in *Origins*, November 7, 1991) instructed the "dear Catholic spouses" and the "dear Catholic physicians" in his diocese that artificial contraception is intrinsically evil, that those who practice it or who recommend it or who prescribe contraceptives or who advise or perform contraceptive sterilization commit grave sin and may not receive Communion without committing sacrilege. We know this, the bishop writes, because it is the church's teaching. "This is our Catholic faith: We believe that when Pope John Paul II teaches in matters of faith and morals, the church teaches; and when the church teaches, Christ the God-man teaches." And there are no loopholes; the bishop quotes a speech by John Paul II to prove it: "It is sometimes claimed that dissent from the magisterium is totally compatible with being a 'good Catholic' and poses no obstacle to the reception of the sacraments. This is a grave error."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Well, it's not a grave error. On the contrary, it's a *really* grave error to teach that the authority of the magisterium deserves more respect and obedience than the demands of conscience; or to believe that speeches and documents in which the magisterium defines the power of the magisterium as essentially without limit have to be taken literally. To be a good Catholic you should take the pope, any pope, seriously; to be a good person you should not let ignorance or laziness or self-interest distort your moral judgments. But an honestly formed conscience is to be followed. I learned that from Sister Alexandrine in the eighth grade, back in the Middle Ages. I learned it again from conservative preconciliar teachers and textbooks in moral and pastoral theology. I've never seen it seriously disputed in an intellectually responsible way.

What bothers me most about those newly minted curates who are making some of their flock into refugees, and about the remarks of Bishop Flavin and John Paul II, is not what they say about birth control (it's conceivable that they're right, though I can't see it) but rather what they're teaching about conscience. And what bothers me most of all is that there are any number of bishops who know better than I that what is being taught about personal moral responsibility is at variance with the church's pastoral teaching, practice, and tradition; for that matter, with any but the most authoritarian kind of ecclesiology, the most simplistic and fundamentalist moral system. And they're not saying anything. Silence about such a matter is not golden but pewter. Concern for the church's integrity and health calls for candor.

ROBERT G. HOYT

REPORT FROM EGYPT

TORTURE FOR A HEALER

MUBARAK & A 'DISSIDENT'

Dr. Mohammed Mandour, a forty-two-year-old Egyptian psychiatrist, was arrested without charge, then blindfolded, beaten, hung by his wrists, interrogated, and tortured with electric jolts by Egyptian officials for ten days last February. Why? Mandour was a respected doctor with only one minor political offense on his record, that from his student activist days nearly two decades before. The reason: Mandour had worked for the Palestine Red Crescent Society—the medical, humanitarian branch of the Palestine Liberation Organization that serves anyone, regardless of nationality, religious, or political affiliation—and was in charge of the psychiatric ward at Cairo's Palestine Hospital where he cared for patients suffering from the psychological stress of the *intifada*, the Palestinian uprising. He was also a member of the board of directors for the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) and a long-time critic of the lack of Palestinian rights in Egypt. During the Gulf War, such links with the Iraqi-supporting Palestinians led to harassment, torture, death threats, and the paranoid actions of a repressive government against its own citizens.

At 11:30 P.M. on February 8, 1991, six police officers arrived at Mandour's home. "When I opened the door, they told me I was being arrested under 'administrative detention.' I was shocked. I haven't been arrested since 1972." As a student at Ain Shams University in Cairo, Mandour had been involved with a movement to create opposition parties in Egypt's one-party system. During one protest, President Anwar el-Sadat sent troops to storm the university and arrest thousands of radical students. Mandour was one of them.

But Mandour's experience with the police as a young man hadn't prepared him for the abuse that awaited him. "I watched them search my house, go through my desk, bookcases, drawers, everything." A military unit escorted him downtown to the State Security Intelligence Building, known as "Lazoghly" after its location in Cairo. "I was terrified when I saw where we were going," he recalls. "Lazoghly is infamous as the government's torture chamber and slaughterhouse. I knew I was in big trouble, but I didn't know why."

The soldiers blindfolded and cuffed Manour before he entered the building. "They put me in a room for ten days," he says. "Not once did they remove the blindfold; I couldn't tell if there was anyone else in the room with me. The only time they removed my handcuffs was when I had to defecate."

After a few hours, Mandour heard a man's voice, the only voice he would hear, over and over, during his ordeal. "He asked me, 'Why are you with these dirty people?'—meaning the Palestinians. His voice was full of hatred. 'They sold their country, their homeland. They would sell their wives for a pack of Marlboros. They aren't human beings,' he said.

"I told him that I work with Palestinians because I understand them more than most Egyptians do. I am a psychiatrist, and I see they are starving for an identity. I help them because I understand," Mandour explained. He first developed a bond with the Palestinian people when he worked at a public hospital in Kuwait from 1978 to 1981. "As a student I had a few Palestinian friends, and I was already very aware of the situation. But when I went to Kuwait, I saw how Egyptians and Palestinians alike were discriminated against in the Gulf states, mostly because of Sadat's policies with Israel."

In 1981 Mandour went to Lebanon to work in mental health services for a government hospital. His work led him to a number of refugee camps, including Shatila, which was decimated with the Sabra camp in the 1982 massacre. In Beirut, Mandour met Fathi Arafat, brother of PLO head Yasir Arafat. He was chief of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Their meeting, Mandour says, "sealed my feelings about the Palestinians and gave me a chance to work alongside them."

After his arrest, the Egyptian government at first denied that Mandour was in Lazoghly, even though his friends and family knew where he was. His interrogator—who became his torturer—told him he was going to die. "You need a good dose of torture. You're going to die slowly. No one will ever find out what happened to you."

"They hung me by my wrists with iron handcuffs for twenty-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

four hours," Mandour told me. "By then, your arms start to separate from your shoulders. The blood was draining from my head. I felt sick and nauseous and I passed out a few times. After a day they took me down and started to question me again, this time even more brutally. They slapped me and beat me in the head. 'You're a doctor,' they said, 'you know how these kinds of beatings will make you lose your vision forever.'

"I think it was the next day when my interrogator started to use electricity. He took off all my clothes, except my underwear, laid me down on a cold, smooth table, and tied down my hands and feet." For the first time during the interview, Mandour, a relaxed, confident, amiable man, trembled as he recounted his story. "He took his electric instrument and put it all over my body, starting at my face and neck. Then he moved it down to my chest, my arms, my stomach, my legs and feet. He concentrated on my testicles, and put the thing inside my penis.

"I tried to sit up or raise myself off the table. When I moved my head I felt my mouth hit an iron bar above me. I tried to be calm; I didn't want to cry in front of him. But I was thinking I wanted him to shoot me," Mandour said quietly.

For ten days the questioning, beating, and electric torture continued. Meanwhile, on the outside, Mandour's family and friends were pressuring the government to release him. His friends aren't just anybody: they are the well-organized, dedicated team of EOHR and they have powerful friends around the world. After a flurry of media attention in Egypt's opposition newspapers, word spread about Mandour's case. Soon letters demanding his release poured into President Hosni Mubarak's office from Amnesty International, Middle East Watch, Article 19, Physicians for Human Rights, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, among others.

Pressure and condemnation from the world community convinced Mandour's captors to release him from Lazoghly. But while his torture had ended, his detention had not.

He was next sent to the crowded Abu Za'bal Prison in northeast Cairo. After six days, on February 23, Minister of the Interior Mohammad Abdel-Halim Moussa ordered Mandour's release saying his interrogation had proved "negative." Several weeks later the minister told Mandour and the EOHR that he would look into Mandour's torture and punish those responsible. Mandour still hasn't heard from the government. Although President Mubarak has received hundreds of angry letters from around the world, he hasn't acknowledged the case. Mandour doesn't expect him to. "I know my government. They arrested me because they thought I was a PLO spy looking to help Saddam Hussein terrorize Egypt. I didn't support Iraq during the war, and I thought it was a mistake for the Palestinians to side with them."

The EOHR reports at least fourteen others suffered the same fate as Mandour during the Gulf War. "Now I know firsthand how my government operates. Mubarak is as cruel and ruthless as Saddam is against his own people," Mandour asserts. However, "since Egypt is a 'friend' of the United States, you'd never know it."

After eight weeks Mandour returned full time to his job at the Palestine Hospital, but his own post-traumatic stress wouldn't allow him to see patients for some time after that. "Every day I feel better and better," he told me. "I don't have nightmares. I feel the experience has made me stronger as a person and as a professional working with the Palestinians." Then he added: "The publicity surrounding my arrest was very embarrassing for the Egyptian government. They won't arrest me again.

"Now when I walk down the street I am happy. I feel free. But I won't forget—the memory makes me strong."

JENNIFER REIDY

Jennifer Reidy, a former editor of Cairo Today, *is a reporter and free-lance writer now living in Connecticut.*

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

WHERE'S THE PARTY?

POLITICIANS WITHOUT POLITICS

The current term-limitation movement—truly a crackpot and undemocratic idea—reminds us that there is a semi-anarchist strain that runs through the American soul. Our rational convictions to the contrary notwithstanding, there is something deep down in every American that endorses the maxim, "That government is best which governs least." We even like Thoreau's amended version: "That government is best which governs not at all."

The first government of the United States, that of the Articles of Confederation, came very close to being no government at all. During the Revolutionary War, the danger of the common enemy caused this no-government to work more or less well, but the end of the war and the disappearance of the enemy soon made it clear that this would not do. So a new constitution was drawn up and reluctantly approved.

But look at the Constitution as orignially created. It was shaped on the principle that we ought to have the highest degree of anarchy compatible with minimal order and good luck. So the power of the national community was divided into small parts. There was, of course, the division into legislative, executive, and judicial branches; then the legislative branch was divided into three parts—the House, the Senate, and the president; the federal power was separated not only from the power of the states but also from the power of the private sector; private contracts were not to be impaired; and to top it all off, a bill of rights was added on, limiting even further the new federal powers.

Well, this arrangement worked as long

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as our luck held. In other words, it worked until slavery became a burning issue. Then the country fell apart, a long and bloody civil war was fought, and we discovered too late that the anarchy quotient in our form of government had been too high.

Since that time, with a few backward slidings from time to time, we have created a strong central government—strong enough to preside over the development of a modern industrial society and welfare state, and strong enough to fight and win two world wars plus the cold war. You might think the creation of this powerful national government during the last century constitutes sufficient proof that we have overcome our love affair with anarchy.

But no. The affair may have grown tenuous at times, but it lingers on. It manifests itself in political campaigns in which candidates denounce, rather fantastically, the existence of big government; in the amazing capacity of the National Rifle Association to block most meaningful gun control legislation; and, of course, in the term-limitation movement.

But the most striking—and most ominous—symptom of our abiding semi-anarchism is the gradual but inexorable movement toward the abolition of political parties in America. As the state was supposed to do under communism but never did, American political parties are simply withering away. They are dying of inanition.

Over a long period of years the party loyalty of voters has declined, while independents have grown increasingly numerous. There is a widespread myth that the independent voter is better informed and more attentive to public affairs than the party loyalist, who merely votes blindly at the instructions of party leaders. But the facts don't support the myth. On average it is the party loyalist who is more attentive and better informed; just as the fan of a particular baseball team is more attentive and better informed about baseball than the "independent" baseball fan who doesn't like any team in particular. And, of course, it is the party loyalist who is more likely to vote on election day; the decline in American voter participation correlates with the rise of the "independent" voter.

At the national level this decline in party loyalty has produced the phenomenon of split government—the White House in the hands of one party, Congress in the hands of the other: a recipe for ineffectiveness, even gridlock. It has also produced violent swings in the popularity of presidents; witness George Bush, who was almost universally approved of twelve months ago but has less than a 50 percent approval rating now. Presidents whose support is so unstable have a severely reduced ability to plan and carry out long-term policies; instead, they are forced to make an endless series of midcourse corrections, trying to maintain or regain the public support they need to avoid complete disaster.

At the level of the states the importance of parties has, if anything, declined even more. Time was when candidates for major office—U.S. senator or representative, governor, mayor of a large city—had to depend on the party organization to get the message to the voters. No more. Now television delivers the message. But TV time and production costs are high. So now the candidate for major office pays scant attention to his or her party and much attention to contributors, especially big contributors. As a result, state and local parties are fading away. Attending meetings of local political committees (something I do from time to time), one sometimes has the feeling the anthropologist must have who came across a dying tribe of aborigines.

With the decline of political parties, our electorate becomes increasingly unstable, uninformed, and apathetic. Small wonder political campaigning has become more and more negative. After all, how is the candidate to catch the voter's attention without resorting to sensationalism?

America's Founding Fathers were suspicious of political parties, which they called "factions." Contemporary Americans have inherited that suspicion, and we seem determined to conduct an experiment in party-less democracy. But suppose it doesn't work? To date, we should remind ourselves, there is no evidence that democracy can survive in the absence of a strong two-party or multi-party system. It is a very dangerous experiment we are embarked on. ❑

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

1492 & ALL THAT

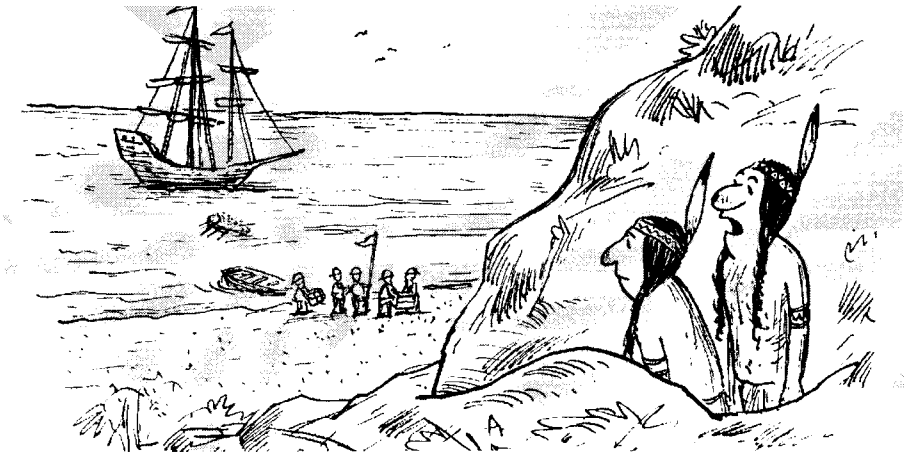
A WESTERN OMELET

The lines were still long when the "Circa 1492" exhibition closed on January 12 at the National Gallery here in Washington. It was an extraordinarily rich exhibition consisting of more than six hundred paintings, works of sculpture, decorative arts, scientific instruments, and other items from five continents. The subtitle, "Art in the Age of Exploration" underlined the exhibit's thesis that the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth century was a period made lustrous by its artists and artisans as well as by its explorers.

It was also the age, according to exhibition planners, whose central date, 1492, symbolized "the dawning of a global perspective" and the birth of the modern era. It was the age in which our European forebears had their views of the world changed forever, the age in which they came in contact with other civilizations and cultures, some much older and more developed than their own.

Theoretically, our popular sense of history has taken this profound change into account. But, in truth, popular history has left us with the lingering impression that the age of exploration marked a renewed world and the beginning of progress when a vigorous European culture was launched into the broader world, eventually to supersede the indigenous cultures of the Americas and Africa and to overwhelm the complicated but stagnant cultures of Cathay and India. We may know better, but that is what we have long felt as the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"Don't worry—they're just a peacekeeping force..."

heirs (direct or indirect) of the explorers and navigators, the conquerors, invaders, and colonists who broke out of Europe five hundred years ago to dominate the world.

Nevertheless, "Circa 1492," although correcting any such impression, did not underwrite the revisionist historians who protest the celebration of Columbus and what he represents. What it did was juxtapose the various cultures in such a way that we could see the exploring nations—the Spanish and the Portuguese, the English and the Dutch—as just other peoples, tribes if you will, in the rise and fall of nations and civilizations.

"China in 1492," reads the gallery brochure, "was the oldest, largest, and richest civilization in the world. Its command of science and technology far exceeded that of Europe. A strong agrarian economy ensured that its inhabitants were better provided for than those of any other society on earth." (The contrast with a Europe struggling against recurring famine in 1492 is striking; even more striking is the contrast with modern nations still battling famine and with our own nation's failure to feed and shelter the homeless.) Ming China was ruled under the emperor by a civil service composed of scholar-officials. It strongly supported the arts. The scrolls, paintings, furniture, and porcelains exhibited at "Circa 1492" testified to this advanced civilization. The emperors had also sponsored voyages to other states as far as the Persian Gulf and the eastern coast of Africa without seeking to extend China's territory.

The arts flourished in Japan and Korea as well. Advanced civilizations existed in the Islamic world and in India. These civilizations were themselves the result of the mingling of cultures after long-past invasions, the movements of nomadic peoples, or the encounters fostered by trade. In comparison to Europe, however, these cultures of the East reflected "an unbroken continuity reflecting past and present unlike the Mediterranean world where Greco-Roman culture had been disrupted during the Middle Ages." They declined, however, as much from cultural exhaustion and internecine warfare as from their encounter with the encroaching West.

What then of the civilizations of the Americas in 1492—the civilizations today's protestors accuse Europeans of destroying? They are fascinating, of course. Some have disappeared with little trace. I was particularly struck with the exhibition's introduction to an Indian civilization of which our history has taken little note. Around A.D. 1000 in what is now Georgia and Mississippi there existed a network of large, multivillage communities centered by the residences of chiefs, shrines to ancestors, and sacred hearths, all mounted on earthen platforms of great size. If we seek for comparisons we discover that the organization was much like that of post-Roman Saxon England, a culture which came to an end with the battle of Hastings in 1066, and the Norman Conquest.

Of the Aztecs and the Inkas (exhibition spelling), however, we now know a great deal. Both created empires in often bloody marches to power and both assimilated the deities, the concepts, and the arts of the people they conquered. They were, in that way, a great deal like the succeeding *conquistadores*. Their art, their architecture, their organization, their science and mathematics—all are impressive but grisly in their association with human sacrifice. The dedication of the Temple in the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, was marked by the sacrifice of 80,000 human beings; the chief of the Inkas was said to have thrown the bodies of 20,000 Caranqui into Lake Yahuarcocha a few years before the arrival of the Spanish. "A bloodthirsty neighbor has no moral advantage over an invader from afar," argues historian Felipe Fernandez-Armesto in the *Economist* (December 21, 1991-January 3, 1992).

Fernandez-Armesto points out that the Latin—in particular, the Spanish—conquerors had, at least, two merits: "First, they meant well, sincerely believing they were freeing their victims from a demonic heritage....Second, they showed unique respect for the vanishing native cultures by attempting to record their history and achievements in a systematic way....All civilizations are omelets made with broken eggs." It does not detract from pre-Columbian civilizations to acknowledge the worth of the succeeding Latin-American civilization which resulted not from an alien imposition but "was a creation of American peoples with outside interference." That civilization created a *pax Hispanica* which extended from the Beagle Channel to the Upper Missouri, adds Fernandez-Armesto. It also comprised the first system in the world in which no human beings of whatever origin, race, or culture were to be excluded from a common juridicial and scientific classification—a truth not previously taken for granted. (And it was a truth not yet acknowledged by the framers of the U.S. Constitution two centuries later.)

"Circa 1492" highlighted the mystery of man and his communities. Why is a creature capable of awesome creative and intellectual achievement also given to violence and a lust for power? Why do some of his organizations last for millennia and others succumb within a century? In a time when ethnic groups seek to destroy each other in Europe, when a superpower lies starving and fragmented, when we ourselves have lately acquiesced in raining bombs on women and children, we may well puzzle over that mystery. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ANNA QUINDLEN: FROM THE '60S TO THE '90S

STILL A CATHOLIC

ALEXANDER M. SANTORA

Anna Quindlen, the *New York Times*' columnist, says she became "public property" in 1986 when she started writing her "Life in the 30s" column. Her first book, a collection of those columns about family and personal life, was aptly named, *Living Out Loud* (Ballantine). A graduate of Catholic schools and Barnard College ('74), Quindlen, now thirty-eight years old, worked her way up the *New York Times* ladder between 1977 and 1985 from general assignment, to City Hall reporter, to the "About New York" column, and finally to deputy metropolitan editor.

Ready to leave full-time journalism in 1988, Quindlen couldn't resist an offer to join the *Times*' op-ed page columnists. "It's a little like being Queen of England," she jokes. That column, "Public & Private," is marked by firm opinions about politics, feminism, and the Catholic church. In 1990, *Esquire* magazine designated her one of "The Women We Don't Love," but called her a "force for good," and credited her with "bringing some life to the op-ed page." *Glamour* magazine named her one of its ten "Women of the Year for 1991" for "infusing journalistic debate with an honest new voice."

Her first novel, *Object Lessons* (Random House), the story of an Irish-Italian family from the Bronx in the late sixties, was published last year. Novelist Anne Tyler wrote in the *New York Times Book Review* that *Object Lessons* "succeeds because of its close attention to character." Sometime sermonizer, always confident, Quindlen sees herself continuing her column well into the nineties, "a time when the issues that I care about most passionately are going to be at the forefront of American consciousness." She lives in Hoboken, New Jersey, with her husband, a criminal lawyer, and their three young children. A.S.

REV. ALEXANDER M. SANTORA, *a graduate of the Columbia University School of Journalism and an intern at* Commonweal, *is a priest at St. Aloysius Parish in Jersey City, New Jersey.*

ALEXANDER M. SANTORA: Where did you grow up?

ANNA QUINDLEN: I was born in Philadelphia. My mother was from South Philadelphia, which was predominantly Italian; my father was from West Philadelphia, which was predominantly Irish. I grew up in a suburb of Philadelphia called Drexel Hill.

SANTORA: What prompted you to come to Hoboken?

QUINDLEN: My husband is a New Jersey native. He went to Rutgers' Law School and knew he was going to practice law here and didn't like the idea of being a carpetbagger. I love New York City. I think it's the center of the universe. I would never live anywhere else if I had my druthers. This was the closest I could get to living in New York City. So that's how we wound up here. My two older children go to private school in Manhattan and their sister will follow them soon.

SANTORA: Why did you choose that?

QUINDLEN: Public school is not an option for us here because I don't think the public schools are good enough. There are some nice private schools in Hoboken. But I really felt that the private schools in Manhattan are just about the best schools I've ever visited in my life. We didn't want them to go to a real high pressure private school and St. Luke's [in Greenwich Village] is this wonderful sort of family atmosphere. The other thing is that there's a religious component to their education. It's an Episcopal school. But we can live with the fact that they add an extra sentence to the end of the "Our Father" every time they say it.

SANTORA: How about the Catholic schools here in Hoboken? You didn't think of them as being viable?

QUINDLEN: No.

SANTORA: Do you think the children miss something in not going to school with the kids they play with?

QUINDLEN: To be honest with you, by the end of the school day, I want them home. They spend so much time at school that I want them with me those hours that they aren't at school. First of all, because I miss them and, second of all, because I intend to be an important influence on their characters. And because there are three of them, they tend to a do a lot of stuff together.

SANTORA: You structure your day so that there's always time

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be with them?

QUINDLEN: At the end of the day. Our sitter always leaves at 5 o'clock but usually by that time I've gone into the city and picked them up.

SANTORA: Your column "Public & Private" changed your life, put you in the spotlight.

QUINDLEN: I already felt like I was in the spotlight from "Life in the 30s." You do an op-ed page column and then people ask you to give speeches and ask for your opinion on whether we should send troops to the Persian Gulf. But with "Life in the 30s" I had told people about how my children were delivered, about what it was like when my mother was dying, about my father. It wasn't just that I was in the spotlight, it was like I was in the spotlight naked.... "Life in the 30s" was where I became public property.

SANTORA: One column you did on Bensonhurst, you really came down hard on Italians. There was one line in there—there's an Italian saying: It's a stupid man who makes his son better than he is....Being Italian-American myself, I never heard this. I agree with you that there are some Italians who promote that kind of inbreeding, but I just wondered where you got that phrase from?

QUINDLEN: It's in the introduction to a book by Helen Barolini called *The Dream Book*, a collection of writing by Italian-Americans. But the fact of the matter is that I had heard things much like it growing up, which is one of the reasons why I used it. My experience growing up half the time in an Italian household with my grandparents was that it was profoundly anti-intellectual. There was a feeling—what good did books do you? The most important thing was family. Going out into a world where you would leave your family was a negative, unacceptable thing. I know that there are Italian households in which children are urged to better themselves and to move on and Mario Cuomo would be the first person to tell you about such a household. My experience of South Philadelphia and Bensonhurst is that it is not very much like [that]. There is this mindset: the best thing you could do for your son is get him a job in the same place where you're working so that he could live near you and you can keep your family unit intact.

SANTORA: What kind of resources do you use on a regular basis? Certain magazines?

QUINDLEN: I read six newspapers a day. The *New York Times*, the *Daily News*, *Newsday*, the *New York Post*, the *Newark Star-Ledger*, and the *Jersey Journal*. I read all the magazines I can get a hold of. I read *Newsweek* and *Time*, and *People* magazine every week. I look at *U.S. Catholic* and *Commonweal* all the time. I look at a whole mess of alumni magazines, most of which have become general interest magazines. I read a lot of books and pick up a lot of stuff from there. I talk to my friends constantly—most of whom are in the newspaper business. My husband, too.

SANTORA: Do you see yourself addressing any constituency or being a voice for anyone in particular?

QUINDLEN: No. I write for me. The one thing I would say is that I tend to write about what we have come, unfortunately, to call women's issues. Those are issues that directly affect my life and those are issues that are historically underreported. Sometimes people will say, well, do you feel like you're a women's columnist. No, I don't. But if I am that wouldn't bother me one bit. Fifty-one percent of the readers is pretty good.

SANTORA: You have a real eye for description.

QUINDLEN: I'm a novelist. I write a column like a novelist writes a column. When I was writing "Life in the 30s," I was writing *Object Lessons*. The two of them were being worked on at the same time.

SANTORA: How much of *Object Lessons* is autobiographical?

QUINDLEN: Not much at all. The milieu is autobiographical. I'm a product of a marriage where dad was Irish and mom was Italian. I grew up in the suburbs at the tail end of the sixties. I'm Catholic. But none of the events in this book ever happened to anybody that I know.

SANTORA: Do you think there was something deeper going on in writing this kind of novel? Were you working through the Irish-Italian combination and the ethnic setting and finding yourself at a different point?

QUINDLEN: No. What I was probably doing at that level was illuminating a different kind of sixties. Not the sixties of sexual revolutions and Woodstock and antiwar demonstrations because that's not the sixties that I experienced. For me the sixties was the beginning of this staid sense of a fault line in all kinds of established institutions and extended families. Suddenly one of the uncles would move away. That's a change. Or in the church. I can't quite remember when it was that suddenly we didn't have to wear hats anymore. But that was a change in my life as cataclysmic as Woodstock. It suddenly seemed to me that a law that was so important that you would turn around in the car and go back home to fulfill it really didn't mean anything. Or didn't mean anything anymore. I was trying to pick up that sense of the time when the fault line started to appear. The fault line has now given us an entirely, radically different society than we had when I was growing up—in terms of the roles of women, the roles of the church, the roles of the community and of the family.

SANTORA: I'm not sure how to gauge your feelings about the church. Sometimes, you talk about the rules, as you just did, something as simple as not wearing a hat can be cataclysmic. On the other hand, you also take the liberal side of church issues. You write about the nuns who left because of the Vatican pressure on them—Barbara Ferraro and Patricia Hussey. You talk about Hunthausen and Curran and Untener. You certainly take the liberal end of the church spectrum.

QUINDLEN: Any of us has a nostalgia for certain forms and rituals with which we grew up. But that's a nostalgia for something that's over. I have no wish to resurrect any of those forms or rituals for my own sake or the sake of my children. There's no doubt that I am in the liberal mainstream of Catholicism and that the people in the church whom I have the most affinity for are the most liberal.

SANTORA: Where do you see the church going?

QUINDLEN: I don't know. I see very clearly in America now

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that there are two Catholic churches: the church of the people and the church of the hierarchy. The irony, it seems to me, is that the church of the people in some ways has never been stronger because the church of the people is a church of choice. It is a choice of people who don't feel compelled to go to church every Sunday. It is a church, to some large extent, of people my age who after turning away from the church, perhaps in their teens or twenties, have willingly come back to give their children something that they feel was important and useful. So, it's a freely embraced form in a way that I feel is much, much healthier than the old strictly obligatory church.

SANTORA: What's involved in that church of the people?

QUINDLEN: I think it's first of all people who rely on their own consciences to tell them the difference between right and wrong. It's people who feel that they've developed through their attendance at church and through their attention to the Old and New Testament, a personal relationship with Jesus and what his lesson can teach them about behaving towards all people in their lives. I think that there's an enormous chasm between the church of the hierarchy and the church of the people.

SANTORA: That church: Is it all done within the family? Is it passing something on to your children? Is it in relationship with other families? Does it have any contact with the institutional parish or church?

QUINDLEN: I think it depends on the parish and the church. Certainly I've seen thriving parishes where there's a holistic approach to families. Parishes that have child-care centers, parishes that have really excellent schools, parishes that have programs for adults that bring all of that together. So, there is education going on in the family and the church at a variety of different levels. I don't think that's possible for all parishes. First, there are many, many pastors who don't agree with that sort of approach. Many pastors think that child care for small children is best done at home by mothers, totally in opposition to the prevailing ethos or economic needs of people. Pastors who say individual conscience is not important: Here is your list of sins; if you disobey any of these tenets, you are in big trouble.

SANTORA: Do you come across people like that?

QUINDLEN: You can read hundreds of letters from them in my file drawer. The mail I get whenever I write about Catholicism, about abortion, about gay people is so full of hatred and judgment from people who inform me that they are Catholics as opposed to me, who is not a real Catholic. I can't figure out what Catholic church these people come from. It's the Catholic church that ends with Leviticus—people who have never heard: love one another as I have loved you; judge not that you not be judged.

SANTORA: Is this a sign of a pluralistic church?

QUINDLEN: When you get negative mail, you've got to remember that people in agreement with you tend to finish their cup of coffee and go off to work. It's when people are really in disagreement with you that they tend to sit down and compose a letter. But I'm sorry to say that some of the sentiments that I see in these letters, I see reflected in hierarchical responses. When a bishop denies the sacraments to an elected official because of their stand on a public matter, I despair.

SANTORA: Do you think it's possible for you to pass

Catholicism on only because you've gone through the institutional phase as a child and that has given you the foundation to be able to pass it on? Short of that, there's a generation of Catholics who will never be the way you are.

QUINDLEN: Right. I know exactly what you're talking about and I think that's a real difficulty. I come to where I am from a bedrock of having to memorize the entire *Baltimore Catechism* —and still remember large chunks of it—and having to acquaint myself in full with the work of all four evangelists. That was a classic way in which you learn everything about a subject and discard that which you think is nonsense. There's a whole generation of Catholics growing up right now who will not learn everything about the church in any way, shape, or form approximating the way in which we learned. The thing for me is that I clearly was not educated as a classic Catholic school kid because I've had discussions with my husband and friends about the fact, for example, that I grew up with some sense that you were able to tell if something was a sin if you personally thought it was wrong or not. And I grew up with this idea that heaven might not be a place but might be a continuation of your brain waves after your body.... I was educated by very liberal nuns and priests, by Holy Child nuns who tend to be extremely well-educated and intellectually rigorous. Most of my priest connections were with Jesuits. I know that this is not exactly mainstream in a lot of ways. The first time I ever said this to my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

husband, he looked at me like I had lost my mind. He said, "No, no. You don't decide. There is a list of what the sins are. You don't get to decide. And brain waves. I'm sorry. I never heard about the brain waves." A lot of what I am already passing on to my children is substantially different from a lot of what I think of was the rule for kids. The Holy Child nuns may want to disavow me. But I will not disavow them. They were marvelous teachers and incredible role models.

SANTORA: You wanted to get married in the church and at the time you weren't sure about having children. You mentioned how the priest saw your heart and later on baptized two of your children.

QUINDLEN: He baptized all of them.

SANTORA: What's your institutional connection? Did you shop around for a parish?

QUINDLEN: To some extent. When we first arrived here in Hoboken, we shopped around a little bit because the priest in the first church we visited was extremely conservative. He kept trying to involve me in courses on natural family planning. Every time he would approach on that level, the hair on the back of my neck would rise. I kept wanting to say to him, "Father, my parents used natural family planning which is why they had five children." Eventually we settled on a parish here in Hoboken, but now we own a weekend house in Pennsylvania and that's where we go to church.

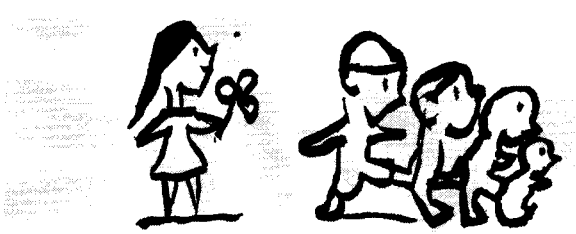
SANTORA: What do you think is the future of the church?

QUINDLEN: That's so complicated by so many different answers.... It will have a great deal to do with who the next few popes are. Who could have anticipated John XXIII and the incredible contribution he made to the church? I think John Paul II has had an enormous negative effect, negative on the church in America particularly.

SANTORA: In what way?

QUINDLEN: He has gone out of his way to appoint conservative bishops to very prominent and visible positions and to at least permit if not urge them to enter into public dialogue on the most divisive and, yet in some ways, most private social issues of the day. People say to me all the time, "Why do you have to write about the church? There have been Catholic columnists for years and they haven't written about the church." The key difference is that the church has made it its business over the last fifteen years to enter aggressively into public dialogue on some of the most important issues affecting this country. When it does that, then people who are commenting on those issues have no choice but to write about the church.

Also people are no longer afraid of the church. I think people used to be afraid to write about the church. Non-Catholics were afraid to write about the church because they felt they didn't really understand it. It had this mysterious air about it. And Catholics were afraid to write about the church for fear of being seen as bad Catholics. I'm not afraid of being seen as a bad Catholic. First of all, because I know that I am a good Catholic. And second of all, because I know that I represent many, many Catholics out there who feel the same way that I do.



SANTORA: A recent issue of *Spy* magazine called you an avatar of common sense and Cardinal O'Connor a fake avatar of common sense. Is it just their whimsy or do you think that's how you're perceived?

QUINDLEN: I think that's how I am perceived.

SANTORA: That's a danger today that the hierarchy is not seen as authoritative in a wider sense. And you're seen as authoritative.

QUINDLEN: What does that tell you?

SANTORA: Well, people probably find that you resonate with their lives more than the hierarchy does.

QUINDLEN: Right.

SANTORA: Do you think that's happening more and more? Is that why the hierarchy is trying to pull back, trying to claim for itself once again authentic Catholic teaching because they feel there have been too many voices, such as theologians or commentators like yourself, that seem to be educating Catholics and they're afraid that they can't control that?

QUINDLEN: Well, I think that's part of it but I think more of it is the simple fact that they realize how many people are acting in opposition to the church doctrine that the hierarchy is intent on hammering home time after time after time. All they have to do is see the oversell about birth control.

Their attitude toward the most useful kind of dialogue just blows my mind. I don't understand how anybody can take issue with what Rembert Weakland did in Milwaukee—just saying let's bring people together to talk about this so I can listen to them. Part of what Archbishop Weakland was saying is look, I'm a man and I've never been married. I want to understand what it's like for these people. That seems to me so much in the spirit of Jesus that it almost doesn't need to be talked about and for him then to have to be unconsidered for an honorary degree by direction of the Vatican. I just don't get it.

SANTORA: On the issue of abortion, you come down on the prochoice side. Yet, you've also indicated that you agonize over the fact that people have to resort to this. You criticized the bishops for going the p.r. route and trying to...

QUINDLEN: No, I criticized the bishops for spending $5 million to go the p.r. route when people are starving in the streets in the United States. I mean that's one of the things that the church does that makes me crazy.

SANTORA: What about the other side, the prochoice side that spends much more—take the National Abortion Rights League. They commit a lot of money and resources to get their point across. Is it just that the church has been too behind the times in that area?

QUINDLEN: No, no. A group like NARAL was set up with one goal only: to see that abortion stays legal in the United States. And people give money to that organization for one reason only,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and that's to see that abortion is legal in the United States. The Catholic church was not set up with that sole mission. Its primary mission seems to be to keep alive the teachings of Jesus. In its work with the poor and the disenfranchised the church does fabulously. No one really appreciates how much the church in New York does to house the homeless, to feed the hungry, to help the pregnant, to raise the babies. It really is far-and-away the best institution in handling those things in this city and, in my opinion, in this country. That light gets buried under the bushel of discussion about Satanism and rock music and exorcisms and condoms and things which, it seems to me, do not serve the primary mission. NARAL's primary mission is one thing. It seems to me that the Catholic church's primary mission is something quite different.

SANTORA: So, you don't take exception to the church's position on abortion?

QUINDLEN: I do. I take exception to the church's position on abortion.

SANTORA: In what way?

QUINDLEN: I understand why the church takes that position. Randall Terry [of Operation Rescue], who is not someone that I admire very much, says that if you believe that abortion is murder you have to treat it like murder. That's one of the few things Randall Terry's ever said that makes sense to me. I think the church has shut its eyes to any evidence to the contrary. Shut its eyes, as it so often does on the hierarchical level, to the grey area. Isn't it possible that this is neither nonlife nor life? That it is something in the middle. That it is, as Sandra Day O'Connor once called it, "potential life." And that, therefore, we have to look at it in a different way than it is either one thing or the other. The prochoice movement, of which I am part, has failed to do that adequately too. I certainly think that the church has showed no inclination to do that. And they try to rewrite history. This whole idea that we were always opposed to abortion is just nonsense.

SANTORA: Do you find yourself closer to Mario Cuomo's understanding of abortion?

QUINDLEN: Yes.

SANTORA: Cuomo says he's not [in favor of abortion] but he would keep it legal because there's no consensus. Would you say that you're closer to that?

QUINDLEN: No. I would keep it legal because I think sometimes it's the right thing to do....I just think there are times when you weigh bringing a completely unwanted child into the world versus terminating what at that point is not a child but is a burgeoning life. I think there are sometimes when one gives way to the other. And I think the proper person to make that determination is the person who is carrying that burgeoning life in her body.

SANTORA: Let's suppose tomorrow you were appointed to the College of Cardinals.

QUINDLEN: Could you imagine?

SANTORA: What would you offer as a way for the church to teach on abortion?

QUINDLEN: I would suggest that all across the world the church do exactly what Archbishop Rembert Weakland did in Milwaukee. Not change its position, not even articulate its position. But sit back and listen so that it could understand why it seemed to be in opposition to so many of its people on this issue. To sit back and listen to some of the distress and the complaints and what has become antipathy. To try to understand that here are a group of unmarried men handing down dogma on an issue which will never touch them in any sort of intimate way—handing it down to people whom it touches every day. To bridge that gap it has to be more ears and less mouth. And then I would appoint Rembert Weakland archbishop of New York.

SANTORA: There was a study released in March [1991] about Catholic bashing. Columnists from the *New York Times* were mentioned. Do you think there is Catholic bashing in the press?

QUINDLEN: No.

SANTORA: What do you see is happening?

QUINDLEN: If the cardinal of New York is the sort of self-effacing, low-profile type that Cardinal Terrence Cooke was, you don't find that much written in the press about the Catholic church. If he's the kind of guy that Cardinal O'Connor is—I mean, the idea that Cardinal O'Connor could take to the pulpit and say some of the things that he says and not think there's going to be public reportage of those things is preposterous.

SANTORA: Isn't that the same as the press giving Al Sharpton a pulpit, even though it's a street pulpit. If the press didn't cover O'Connor, you still think he'd be news?

QUINDLEN: He makes news. When you get up in the pulpit in St. Patrick's Cathedral and talk about how you're personally aware of priests performing exorcisms, you're making news. That's like saying would it be news if we didn't cover the president of the United States. Of course, it wouldn't. We make news on the basis of anybody saying anything we haven't heard before. O'Connor's constantly saying things we haven't heard before.

SANTORA: So, you don't think the press has a role in glorifying the kinds of things he says.

QUINDLEN: No, I think the press has historically covered the Archdiocese of New York because it is in New York in a more concerted way. Do I think that is why the pope placed the current occupant in that job? Absolutely, I have no doubt about it.

SANTORA: How long do you see yourself doing "Public & Private?"

QUINDLEN: I don't really know. I think columnists tend to outstay their welcome and start to do bad imitations of themselves. I never want to do that. But it really seems to me that the nineties is going to be a time when the issues that I care about most passionately are going to be at the forefront of American consciousness. I think child care and family planning and abortion and homelessness and some of those things are really going to be some of the most pivotal issues of the next ten years and I certainly feel I can go on writing about them forever.

SANTORA: Do you see Hoboken in your future, too?

QUINDLEN: I'm going to stay. The only other possibility is to move back to New York, which I can't afford, or to move out to the burbs, which I can't bear. Unless my husband manages to talk me into this after all these years, I'm going to stay put. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHERE DOES IT END?

THE PUBLIC INVASION OF PRIVACY

JAMES B. RULE

One bracing feature of Watergate was the sweeping indictments of public institutions it elicited from figures of impeccable establishment credentials. For example, "If we have learned anything in the last year of Watergate, it is that there must be limits upon what the government can know about each of its citizens. Each time we give up a bit of information about ourselves to the government, we give up some of our freedom. For the more the government or any institution knows about us, the more power it has over us. When the government knows all of our secrets, we stand naked before official power. Stripped of our privacy, we lose our rights and privileges. The Bill of Rights then becomes just so many words."

The speaker was Senator Sam Ervin, seeking to rally congressional opponents of the Nixon administration against abuse of government power.

At that moment, in the summer of 1974, Ervin knew that he was jabbing at one of the tenderest nerves in American public opinion. The events of Watergate—for example, the effort to mobilize IRS data on Nixon's enemies in order to harass them—had conveyed a chilling vision of the politics of personal data. Most Americans, already disenchanted with the official deceptions that had led to the Vietnam quagmire, now contemplated perhaps a still more fearsome prospect: A thoroughly uncivil state, commanding vast amounts of sensitive data on its citizens and prepared to exploit these informational riches to suppress domestic dissent.

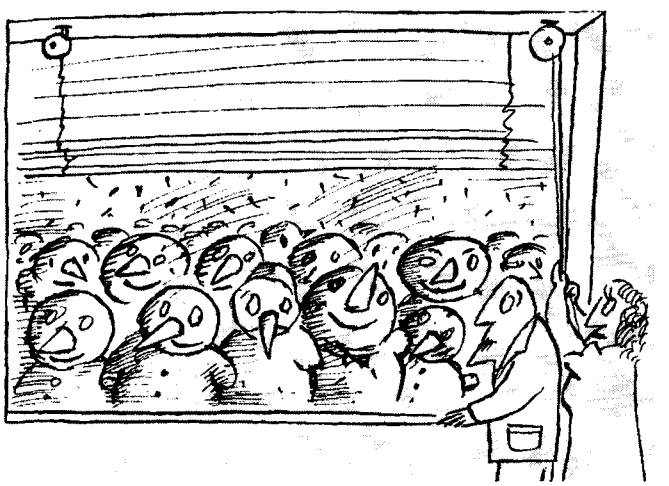
The legislation that Ervin was seeking to promote went on to become the Privacy Act of 1974—more of this below. But a sea change separates the current state of privacy and institutional collection of personal data in America from the Watergate era. Who could then have predicted, for example, that Americans in the 1990s would tolerate massive government-directed programs of mandatory urine testing in the workplace—a program aimed not at those whose behavior gave suspicion of drug-taking, but against the *possibility* of drug use?

More to the point, the years since passage of the Privacy Act have seen continued growth of new possibilities of institutional scrutiny over what used to be considered private affairs—and an ever-rising appetite of those in charge to exploit such possibilities. Consider the privacy-invading information dragnet initiated last spring by the corporate giant Procter and Gamble. In an effort to curtail the flow of embarrassing information from company insiders to the *Wall Street Journal*, top executives of the company instigated a computerized dragnet of telephone records.

In the words of a subsequent *Wall Street Journal* account, Cincinnati Bell "had to search through some 655,297 home and business telephone lines and 35 million toll calls" between March 1 and June 15. The purpose was to identify "all 513 area code numbers that dialed the home or office phone number" of the author of the unflattering stories. Computerized record keeping makes such searches highly feasible. In the process, of course, vast amounts of what had once been considered "private" citizens' "private" communications were exposed.

What compels concern here is not any single privacy-invading "error in judgment," to use the delicate term chosen by Proctor and Gamble's chief executive for his actions. Instead, it is the steady growth of *systems for generating, storing, and communicating* personal information on vast scales. Computerized telephone records are just one of the more visible systems of this kind.

Consider a much less well-known case—the Treasury Enforcement Communications System (TECS). During formalities at U.S. border crossings, U.S, officials seek to enter in this system the names of all those arriving in this country. These data are then made available to a variety of participating agencies,



JAMES B. RULE, *a member of the editorial board of* Dissent, *teaches sociology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ranging from the State Department and IRS to the FBI and CIA. In some instances, participating agencies require immediate notification of the movements of specific persons; in other cases, agencies relying on the system electronically sift through the backlogs of data to trace past movements of persons of interest to them.

Or consider another development in institutional monitoring of Americans' lives and movements: the National Crime Information Center, the computerized personal data service maintained by the FBI for use by the nation's law-enforcement agencies. Since its inception in 1967, this agency has steadily broadened the coverage of its files.

In 1988, the FBI proposed what many no doubt saw as the natural, if not inevitable next step in development of the NCIC—its extension to include names of persons "of interest" to participating agencies, but not actually wanted for arrest. The agencies entering such names were to be notified whenever these names were the subject of inquiries elsewhere in the system—for example, when another law-enforcement agency encountered the individual in question and entered an inquiry on him or her. As more and more law-enforcement agencies routinely enter names of persons they encounter into the NCIC computer in hopes of a "hit"—that is, of an indication that a person they have encountered is wanted for arrest—the potential of such a system for tracking persons "of interest" grows.

This proposal spurred sharp criticism from civil libertarians, including Representative Don Edwards (D-Calif.). Ultimately, these objections had their effect. In March 1989, FBI Director William Sessions dropped the controversial proposal from the organization's $40 million plan for modernization of the NCIC. It would be rash to imagine that we have heard the last of the idea.

The Privacy Act is still the most important federal legislation governing treatment of personal data. It mandates public acknowledgment of the existence of data files, and access to one's own file. It creates due process rules by which one can challenge the accuracy and pertinence of data held in a file. And it gives grounds for redress when personal information is used for purposes other than those for which the file is officially intended. The Privacy Act applies only to data held by federal agencies. But similar principles guide legislation governing other personal data systems, both government and private, including those maintained by credit reporting firms and banks.

The Privacy Act is also notable for what it lacks. Ervin's original legislation provided for a permanent Privacy Board—a kind of personal-data ombudsman within the federal establishment. Besides having responsibility for enforcing the act, the board was to have been empowered to investigate privacy-relevant practices of federal, state, and local government agencies, and to act in defense of privacy interests against data-keeping bureaucracies.

President Gerald Ford, realizing that a permanent Privacy Board would constitute an enduring check on executive branch discretion over personal data, managed to kill the provision. As a result, the United States now stands virtually alone among the industrial democracies of North America, Europe, and Australia in lacking an agency of this kind.

Measured against the original aspirations of Ervin and the public anxieties he sought to mobilize, privacy protection efforts have fallen far short. Some of the disappointment stems from treatment the Privacy Act has received from indifferent or hostile administrations since 1974. In the absence of a Privacy Board, responsibility for oversight of the act was conferred on the Office of Management and Budget. Always acutely responsive to the political moods of the executive branch, OMB has treated the act with less-than-benign neglect. In addition, a key provision of the act—specifying that data provided to one federal agency for a particular purpose must not be made available to other agencies without the individual's consent—has been completely circumvented.

But nothing in the Privacy Act, or any other measure enacted in this connection, has provided an effective basis for opposing new bureaucratic opportunities for centralized monitoring of the sort noted here. We need to think harder and deeper than the authors of the Privacy Act did about where to draw the line on such matters.

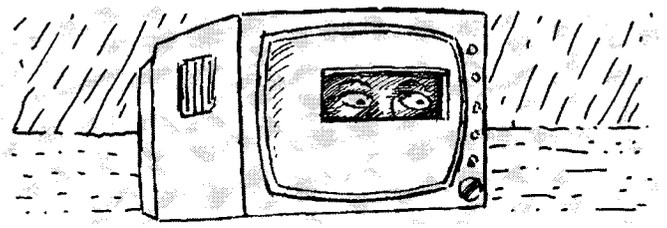
There can be no doubt that these new personal data systems, and countless others like them, offer major gains in efficiency for the organizations concerned. And often these gains support values that no one could fault, from fighting crime to increasing safety and productivity in the workplace. But it would be disastrous to imagine that these are the only values involved. New ventures in personal data collection like these shift a subtle balance in power and prerogative from "private" individuals to the institutions appropriating their data.

Particularly pernicious is the notion that the extension of institutional monitoring of "private" life is warranted, whenever the organizations involved show a genuine "need" for it. The trouble is, such "needs," though often authentic, are in principle insatiable. Public and private bureaucracies consistently find ways to "do better" by knowing more about the people they deal with, and by spreading such knowledge more widely. But the values of "doing better" in this connection are hardly the only ones that require attention—and often they are not the most important. What is won in efficiency has to be weighed against the potential inherent in systems of this kind for damage to individual autonomy and privacy.

In fact "private protection" is a peculiar term for the values at stake here. What has been at stake in legislation and policy like the Privacy Act has had more to do with the dangers of disclosure, not as an experience in itself, but as a means to other ends. What we object to in the creation of sweeping systems of personal monitoring, in other words, is not that the data should be disclosed *at all*, but that it should be mobilized so as to confer new powers and subject individuals to new institutional pressures. In seeking to "protect privacy," we seek to avoid slipping into a world where those at the centers of power can mobilize any data on any citizen at will—for any purpose.

For any change in patterns of appropriation or access to personal information cannot help but raise power issues—much

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



as official language may seek to downplay them. J. Edgar Hoover's extraordinary influence over public affairs, it appears, stemmed from the widespread belief that he had amassed embarrassing or incriminating data on vast numbers of public figures. The very existence of such data—or the belief that they do, or may, exist—has potent effects. Thus we must question the wisdom of government systems that automatically generate data about what Americans were at a particular place, or traveling from a particular destination, at a particular moment—and with whom.

The same concerns hold for private-sector appropriation of personal information. Granting employers the option of demanding that employees produce urine for drug testing creates a powerful means of potential pressure, one whose use is at employers' discretion. Like polygraph testing, drug testing is an exercise in intimidation. And should a test appear to reveal some trace of drug use, that information in itself provides the basis for all sorts of influence over the employee, both on the job and in any future setting where that data may surface.

The values at stake here thus cannot be reckoned simply in additive terms—as though the "social bads" resulting from misuse of personal information were the total of the personal grievances of individuals whose data are misused. More subtle, but potentially more important, are the holistic interests of a public concerned with the possibilities of full public discourse and uninhibited grass-roots action. In extremis, the sense that nearly any personal information about one's self might be recorded somewhere, and subjected to unfriendly use, chills all sorts of desirable public participation. A vigorous public life demands conditions in which the boundaries between public and private information are clearly understood, and conscientiously respected.

So much for generalities. How could we accomplish what the Privacy Act of 1974 leaves undone? What practical principles should we invoke to weigh the acceptability of collection and use of personal data? One goal well worth striving for is a world where citizens could conduct all their affairs on a simple assumption—to wit, that personally-identifiable data about one's self will not become part of any institutional data system in the absence of (1) a mutual, interactive relationship between one's self and the data-keeping organization that requires personal records, or (2) specific legal authority to require the surrender of data. Education, insurance, medical care, trade union membership, and a variety of other basic social relationships clearly presume at least a modicum of record-keeping; providing for such a modicum should not be controversial. Similarly, unilateral requirements by government bureaucracies for data demonstrably needed to collect taxes, issue passports, license drivers and the like should dismay no one. But it would be salutary to require specific legal authority before demands by government agencies and private organizations seeking such data could be considered binding.

Such authority should be granted sparingly. Instead, we should regard access to anyone's personal information as a potential infringement on his or her personal autonomy or freedom of action—like the signing of a power of attorney. Even where it is not clear what harm would result from surrender of one's data, the presumption ought to be that control over it remains with the individual, in the absence of a specific mandate otherwise. True, qualifications are needed. No such presumption should apply to collection of personal information for purposes of journalism, scholarship, or public debate. But it should most emphatically apply to admininstrative and commercial uses of personal data.

The case for a presumption of confidentiality holds *a fortiori* for private-sector recycling of personal data. Here we would do well to establish a kind of property right in commercial exploitation of personal data—as sociologist Kenneth Laudon and others have suggested. Such a right would provide individuals the option of vetoing the sale of "their" data by charities, credit card firms, mail order houses, telephone companies, and other organizations to direct mail firms and other marketers. It could also enable citizens to claim royalties in exchange for release of "their" data—thus gaining a share in the considerable profits stemming from commodification of personal information.

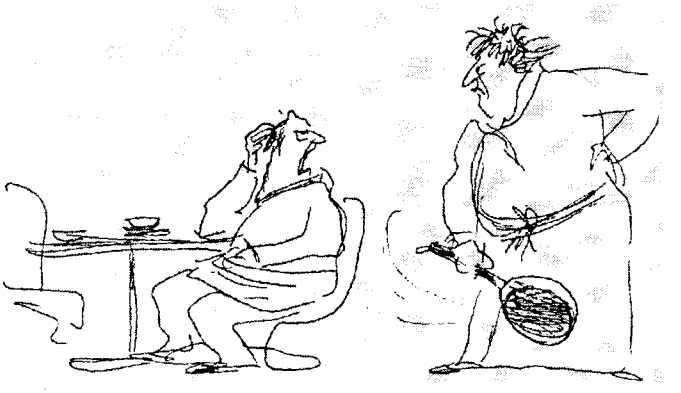
For now, details of how such rights might be implemented matter less than the principle. The principle—the presumption that one remains in control of one's own data, unless a compelling interest to the contrary is legally recognized—may be gaining recognition. The state of New York has recently outlawed a merchandizing practice that had become quite common: the requirement that customers provide their home addresses and phone numbers to merchants on making credit card purchases. Contrary to what consumers were led to believe, data so collected were not necessary to effect the sale, but were used as a basis for cheap junk-mail appeals. Similarly, a bill that passed the California legislature in 1990 would have accorded customers the right to veto dissemination of their credit files, except to government investigators. Vigorously opposed by the industry, the bill was vetoed by Republican Governor George Deukmejian.

These legislative efforts are the merest of straws in the wind. But they do remind us that the sensitivities that sought expression in the privacy protection efforts of the early 1970s are not extinct. They show, in particular, that the power issues associated with appropriation of personal data are still visible to many, even in a relatively conservative period. We need vigorous public discussion of such matters as how readily government investigators should have access to logs of private citizens' phone calls, or when company physicians should disclose medical data to employers, or when IRS or Social Security data should be used to enforce obligations like child support. What has to be opposed, in such debates, is the assumption that efficient operation of the organizations claiming and using personal data is the only, or the paramount value at stake. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ASSASSINATIONS

'BUGSY' & 'JFK'



"I can understand violence, Gloria, but not senseless *violence!"*

Bugsy has much to recommend it—electric acting, gleaming photography by Allan Daviau that charges the physical world of the film with the lurid potentialities that the hero sees in it, a romantically sinister Ennio Morricone score, flexible direction by Barry Levinson that serves up scenes of violence, sensuality, comedy, and even domesticity with equal adroitness—but the movie will succeed or fail with each viewer to the extent that that viewer is gripped by the nature of the hero whose nickname gives the movie its title. The implications of that nickname are the substance of the film.

Of course, "bugsy" means crazy. And to the sober, fiscally responsible gangsters who are Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel's associates, "bugsy" means unpredictable, uncontrollable, fiscally irresponsible. Craziness, to them, is indicated by a willingness to invest in a project that has no precedent and guarantees no profit, namely Siegel's willingness to invest in a huge gambling enterprise called Las Vegas. Craziness is also indicated by a willingness to trust a woman with money just because she happens to be your mistress, as Siegel is willing to trust Virginia Hill with the administration of the money that is financing Las Vegas. Las Vegas and Virginia are the immediate causes of Siegel's downfall and death.

To Siegel himself the nickname is utterly abhorrent and he often hits people who address him by it. For to be "bugsy" is to be insane and to be insane is to be possessed by visions that have no basis in reality, while it is Siegel's pride, an artist's pride, to have a vision of what may become real. To be called "bugsy" indicates that your visions are mere delusions and will never be realized. That is an implication that Siegel cannot tolerate. This movie is about a man who is crazy if his plans come to nothing, who is sane if his plans succeed. The whole movie tries to put a question mark after its title.

The reason that the movie succeeds with me is that I found myself allowing that question mark to appear. The movie's limited, exasperating, but undeniable triumph is this: it constantly demonstrates how tightly our views of sanity and insanity are tied to mere pragmatism.

For instance, when Siegel sees a house in L.A. that attracts him, he immediately walks in and tries to buy it from its owner, the great opera singer Lawrence Tibbett. Tibbett's immediate reaction, as Siegel opens a briefcase stuffed with money, is ours: this guy is crazy. But, one scene later, Tibbett is comfortably ensconsed in the best hotel in L.A. and is spending the huge sum of money with which the gangster has overpaid him. And Siegel has the base of operation he needs to conduct business. Was the transaction crazy?

A grimmer example: Bugsy is sent by Meyer Lansky (played to dainty perfection by Ben Kingsley) to kill a man who has embezzled from the mob. As we soon see, Siegel can simply walk into the man's numbers operation and blow him away without opposition. But Siegel first buys some expensive shirts and offers them to his victim, explaining that the embezzler could have had these elegant shirts instead of "stealing the shirt off my back." Then Siegel kills the man. Why the shirts? To catch his victim off guard? Not necessary. Rather, the viewer gets the sense that Siegel really had to demonstrate to his victim, with visual aides (the shirts), why he had to die. It's not enough for Siegel to kill; he must have the victim see the point of his own death. Somehow, this act seems crazier than the house buying not because it is murderous but because it is an enactment of Siegel's vision of himself as a reasonable man exacting reasonable justice—three bullets in the chest! If only Siegel had shot without talking, he would not seem so bugsy. But wait, isn't murder-for-money itself the craziness? And wasn't the shirt demonstration at least an executioner's effort to make some human contact with his victim and therefore the only sane feature of an insane act? Or...?

In any case, this movie shook me up. Compliments to James Toback, who has learned from his onetime mentor, Norman Mailer, how to keep his audience from too quickly applying the word "monster" to a doer of monstrous deeds. Compliments to Warren Beatty for a performance that counterpoints frame-quivering rage with eyeclouding doubt, comedy with menace, a lover's fondness with an efficient killer's unreachability. It's the best performance of Beatty's career.

Even the critics who have called attention to the way Oliver Stone has juggled facts with factoids in *JFK* have called his film a superb job of moviemaking. It is nothing of the kind. Robert Richardson is a fine cameraman, of course, and he skillfully distinguishes the present tense of this story from the flashbacks by using interesting gradations of black-and-white, gray-and-white, brown-and-white, and full color. But Stone's idea of energizing a scene is to have New Orleans prosecutor Jim Garrison harangue a room while Stone cuts in 4,963 reaction shots of Garrison's admiring assistants. When the putative villain, Clay Shaw, enters the present tense of the story (after having

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been established as a monster in the flashbacks), the camera is fixed first on the elegantly tailored lower half of his body, then pans up to his face. This shot has been used by a thousand hacks to signal that the devil has just entered. As sheer filmmaking, *JFK* is sheer kitsch.

The last third of this nearly three-hour movie presents the trial of Clay Shaw. The prosecutor, Garrison, and through him, Oliver Stone, use the case to attack the Warren Report, and this exposé is as unsettling as the many articles and TV documentaries that have rightly criticized the report. But in the almost fifty minutes of cinematic muckraking, not one point is made that clearly implicates Clay Shaw in the Kennedy assassination. Not one single point. Earlier in the film, Garrison tells his aides that he doesn't know how Shaw figures in the murder—and he doesn't care! When Garrison addresses the jury he tells them if they don't find Shaw guilty, they are, in effect, accepting the Warren Commission's findings, are keeping the real assassins from justice, and are helping to keep a fascist government in power. (Yeah, the L.B.J. presidency. Is Stone the last surving member of the SDS?) Whether or not Shaw is guilty or innocent is of no interest to Garrison nor, apparently, to Stone. Yet this is the filmmaker who dedicates *JFK* to all future generations who dare to seek out the truth.

Oliver Stone has become the Joe McCarthy of the Left. Given the current climate of public cynicism, disaffection from politics, and paranoia, I'm sure Stone's career will continue to flourish.

RICHARD ALLEVA

Bruce Drucker

The Frying Pan in Winter

Its hundred pools curl over boulders
The size of cars. Amid the rock, speckle-back
Trout move easily in the summer of my mind,
Rising to the hatch, sipping lazily
Among thick-bodied bits of shrimp,
Ephemerella nymph. Now that it is winter,
The green water tunnels through glass hoods.
Snow has sharpened the crack
Of gravel and the long, skewered light
Lantern-beams briefly on the moonscape bed.
Now that it is winter, no one wades
The Seven Castles pool and upstream a single
Fisherman gently unhooks his prey
And slips it back like a book to the shelf.
Clamps his hand under the armpit. It is an easy
Day of short sun, and the thick water
Verging to ice warms only
The ox-bows of memory.

MEDIA

THE CHAT SHOW

FROM STEVE ALLEN TO OPRAH

During the second round of the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings—*you* remember, when Judge Thomas was accusing the Senate Judiciary Committee of being racist and Alan Simpson, the Freddie Krueger of jurisprudence, was accusing Professor Anita Hill of being a psychotic liar—a cartoon by the brilliant Jeff MacNelly appeared in which the Judiciary Committee was peopled by characters with the nameplates "Phil," "Oprah," and "Sally Jesse," and one of them was asking, "And who's our next witness, Geraldo?"

It was a gag that carried the shock of what the Japanese call *satori*, instantaneous clarification: *of course* that's what the Thomas/Hill *mischegas* (Yiddish for "mess") had been. The Talk Show from Hell. Or, better yet, a stunning demonstration of how deeply the psychology and, I'd even say, the phenomenology of the talk show has embedded itself in our perception of what it means to live in America—or even scarier, *incarnates* that perception.

The talk show, first of all, is like its sibling, the game show, a virtually fail-safe concept for the Tube: cheap sets, blessedly low production costs, and a solid hour of signal.

But what messages does the signal carry *besides* the explicit, up-front, articulated ones? You can't send a message, after all, without "white noise" or static: it's what opens the channel *for* the message, the hum of the stereo, the random flecks of light on the TV screen, like that. And what the hell is the *static* saying? A lot. And a lot that you might not want to hear but can't help but hear.

The Tube talk show—as manifested in the Big Four of Phil, Oprah, Geraldo, and Sally Jesse—is an outgrowth or maybe a mutation of something that's been around for much longer, the chat show. These are my terms, so I'll explain.

The chat show began in the fifties, with Steve Allen's version of the NBC *Tonight* show. Celebrities, and celebrity wannabees, rushed to appear on the set with Steve and make usually inane conversation—what Steve was always best at—and America was enraptured: golly-roo, Ethel, these famous guys are just as dumb as *us*!

Jack Paar, in the late fifties and early sixties, turned this minor phenomenon into a major phenomenon by democratizing it further. Where Steve Allen had been a multitalented mediocrity, Paar was a mediocrity pure and simple (heavy on the simple): his vulnerability and more or less permanent off-the-pointness wasn't just part of his charm, it was the key center—as in, "let's play blues in A-Minor"—of his aura. Steve had been snotty; Jack was wimpy: we liked Jack even better.

And then came Johnny Carson, and David Letterman, and Arsenio Hall, still all with us and still continuing the chat show

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tradition of befuddled semi-talk with folks you may or may not Cross the Street to Meet in what we still, nostalgically, call "real life."

But peace be upon Carson and his clones. The chat show was still missing something, at least if the chat show wanted to grow up to be the talk show. A funnily-cognitively-impaired host, okay; a panel of guests severely constellated along the spectrum from earned fame to chosen weirdness, okay; what could be missing here?

An audience. An audience that not only watched and listened to the blather but that responded to it, challenged it, insulted or supported the guests on the dais and, optimally, started quarreling with one another as well as with the guests.

Now *that* is one strong drug. Ever watch Phil or Oprah or whatever in the den with a pal or two? It may be the *only* kind of TV where viewers talk to the screen. "You bastard!" "How can you *say* that?" "Good for *you*!" These are, scout's honor, comments I have heard, addressed to a *television set* by a dear friend of mine who shall be nameless and I'm married to.

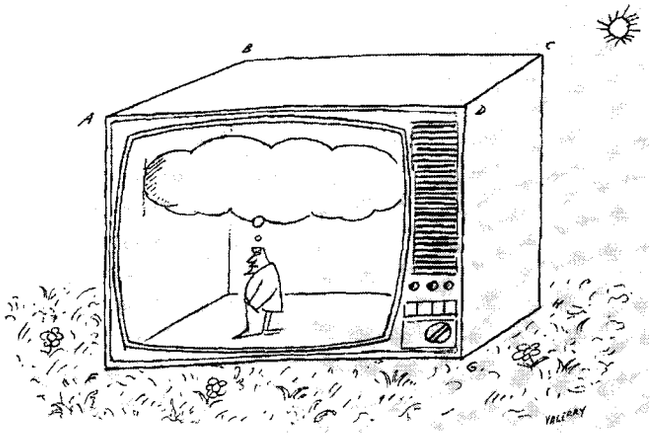
And this happens because, of course, the audience of Just Plain Folks *on* the screen—or is it *in* the box?—who are hollering at the mythic figures on the stage (Ollie North or transvestite vegetarian Nazis, makes no difference, they're on stage so they're mythic), *that* audience is the psychic surrogate of the audience in the den. And as we watch, the Tube, as it were, *spills into* the den and we find ourselves becoming part of the discourse. Emotionally, it's 3-D television.

Or is it? The responding audience, which by me is essential to the talk show in its fully formed state, plays essentially the same role as the Chorus in Greek tragedy or the clowns in Shakespeare: to mediate between the high drama we behold (Oedipus, Othello, Ollie) and the everyday world *from which* we behold it. "Give us your applause," say the clowns at the end of a remarkable number of the Bard's comedies. "Yes! Caller!" says Phil—or Oprah or blah blah—in the last, usually most frenzied commercial-break segment of the five-days-a-week ritual. In each case it's an invitation to the dance, and dance, to be sure, we do.

Except that on the Athenian and Elizabethan stage there really *was* a dance to join. You were *there*, and at the end of the performance the community—the real reason for the drama in the first place—was renewed and reaffirmed as players, chorus, and watchers all together left the theater to go back into the life of the commonwealth they had just, magically, sacramentalized.

And just what is reaffirmed at the end of an afternoon with Oprah? Our frustration at *not* really encountering the people in the box. Our inevitable isolation as spectators and *not* concelebrants of what we had thought was a dialogue. Our impotent frustration at the fact that the Tube, for all its blandishments, is only—like dope and pornography—experience as *sold* to you. If the talk show is TV at its most "interactive" (a good goofy sociologist's word), its final effect is to *deny* the interaction that is its seductive promise. Like dope and porn, in other words, it is the merchandising of infinitely deferred fulfillment.

Except that the "fulfillment" in this case is the sense of the human community itself.



And it's an accident, you want to tell me, that this phenomenon *becomes* a phenomenon in the era of Ronald Reagan, George Bush, the politics of the sound-byte, and war as a video game? The age in which far less than half of our people vote for the presidency because "those politicians are all the same" anyhow? The time when the president can score low in the polls for domestic policy and—good Lord!—high for "presidential quality"?

As the brilliant and mourned Roland Barthes once wrote, the erotic gives itself while the pornographic only shows itself. And isn't that a *précis* of our societal malaise? What you're shown is what you get, and don't you dare ask for more. And that's why Phil, Oprah, Sally, Geraldo, and their brood—good souls all, I have no doubt—are, in their way, mimes (like the dumb show preceding the play-within-the-play in *Hamlet*) of the progressive decay of the will to act for the public good in our New World Order.

And that—and I think we'd better listen—is what the static is saying.

FRANK McCONNELL

STAGE

THE BARD LIVES

'PERICLES' & 'NIGHT'S DREAM'

"*Pericles* is one of the most beautiful plays ever written." With that sentence, M. Elizabeth Osborn opened her love song to Shakespeare's eccentric romance which appeared in *Theater Week* (December 2, 1991), just in time for the play's opening at the Public Theater. When I read the play a few days before I attended the production, it was the first time I had looked at the work since I was preparing for my Ph.D. orals more than forty years ago. It still seemed to me a patchwork of tag ends picked up at a Renaissance flea market—now tedious, now beguiling, now foolish, now fond. Betty Osborn and I—the true believer and the confirmed skeptic—went together to see what wonders Michael Greif (fresh from last year's phantasmagoria, Constance

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Congdon's *Casanova*) had worked on Shakespeare's recalcitrant yet vulnerable script. The production confirmed both Osborn's faith in the play's essential coherence and my sense of its grand incoherence, and at the same time delighted both of us. It was the most exciting—certainly the most theatrical—piece that I have seen so far this season. It is a shame that it is not still running so that both my readers could check it out for themselves.

Not being an Aristotelian—let alone a neoclassical—tragedy, *Pericles* celebrates the disunity of action, time, and place. It is a gallimaufry of villainy and loyalty, storms at sea, piratical abductions, incest, brothel comedy, death and resurrection. The action is scattered all over the Mediterranean, moving, usually by way of shipwreck, from Antioch to Tyre to Tarsus to Pentapolis to Ephesus to Mytilene, and it takes place over enough years to allow Marina to be born and to grow to marriageable age. In this production, the scenes are spread across centuries. John Gower, whose *Confessio Amantis* was one of Shakespeare's chief sources, is used by the playwright as a chorus. When we first meet him, he is a proper figure of the fourteenth-century poet, a decrepit creature who looks as though he really has been called up "from ashes," as his first speech says. With each appearance, he gets younger, his dress changes until he finally emerges as a young man in a sports jacket, his transformation marking that of the play. The brothel scene—that exemplary account of the power of innocence to corrupt evil—might pass as a contemporary revue sketch with a bawd (Bobo Lewis) who is more Brooklyn than Mytilene.

The key to the success of this *Pericles* is that it can go for the most obvious laughs without mocking Shakespeare or the genre he is toying with. There is much playfulness in the production—games with costume and prop and bombastic readings. In the Pentapolis scenes, for instance, in which Pericles wins fair Thaisa, her father, king or no king, is a figure of slapstick fun, and the rival suitors are painted side-by-side on a single board, manipulated by an actor who does all the voices. Each scene in the play has found its particular voice and, with no mandatory tone to violate, it vacillates between excessive broadness and touching lyricism. Campbell Scott, whose Pericles shifts comfortably from comedy to pathos, makes the transitions seem easy.

Since the play begins with Pericles's escape from the murderous king of Antioch, who wants to protect his incestuous love of his daughter, the saintly Marina, the play can be read (and not just in these scenes) as another variation on fathers and daughters, this one with the happy ending denied *King Lear*. Thematic coherence, after all, but that seems of much less importance than the theatrical vigor that Shakespeare and Greif gave to scene after scene.

There has so far been only one other notably inventive Shakespeare production this season (not counting *Prospero's Books*)—*A Midsummer Night's Dream* presented by the Bryn Mawr/Haverford Theatre Program. I usually do not comment on amateur productions, but this was a special one. Robert Smythe, the puppeteer whose work I described in my review of *The Puppetmaster of Lodz* (October 26, 1990), visiting artist this year at Bryn Mawr, both directed and designed puppets and masks for this *Midsummer*. When the lovers fall asleep in the woods, they awaken as Bunraku-style puppets, manipulated by the actors who play the parts. From time to time, the lovers try to break away from their puppet selves and eventually, when the puppets have been put aside, they remove their masks as well (from the beginning, the human characters wear half masks, the fairies are clean-faced), a device that allows the production to suggest the levels of illusion the play can hold. Smythe's other good choice was to reduce the "rude mechanicals" to two, Bottom and Quince (played by young women with a natural talent for slapstick), who present their "most Lamentable Comedy" Punch-and-Judy style, with hand puppets on stages that they wear as costumes. The performers, who were serviceable enough for the occasion, could not be expected to have the skills of practiced professionals, but one could forgive a little stiffness of speech and movement when the stage was flooded with so much imagination.

GERALD WEALES

ART

NUDE IS LEWD?

THE DRAMA OF THOMAS EAKINS

Someday (alas) Hollywood will beat a path to Thomas Eakins's grave. Jealousy, betrayal, scandal, and tragedy rocked his dedicated life. A welcome illumination of this enigmatic figure, who ranks as one of America's greatest painters and its most affecting portraitists, is the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts' "Thomas Eakins Rediscovered: At Home, at School, at Work" on view in Philadelphia until April 5. Consisting of items from the collection of one of Eakins's former students, the show presents previously unexhibited preparatory oil sketches, drawings, photographs, letters, and memorabilia alongside better known finished work. Though the exhibition is modest in quantity, its cumulative effect is to bestow on the curious visitor a new perspective on Eakins.

In 1886 Eakins (1844-1916) was forced on moral grounds to resign as director of the Pennsylvania Academy. Now the documentation of that incident and its surrounding circumstances is bringing viewers through the academy's doors—how much poetry lies buried in a culture's transformation of an instance of intolerance into an investment in the future! Indeed, the story of Eakins's turbulent relations with Philadelphia society forms one episode in a larger drama that runs both comically and tragically through American life: The Drama of Respectable Appearance. Think of the hymns to temperance in *Poor Richard's Almanack*—the work of another famous Philadelphian—and its author's advice in a letter to a Parisian woman friend that "the most effectual way to get rid of a certain Temptation is, as often as it returns, to comply with it." Nowadays, when some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one's respectable veneer unravels, the ensuing media spectacle is society's way of reconstituting fallen appearances. Under the electric glare a scandal's disruptive particulars settle back into a hallucinatory order, a decorum-in-reverse. In Eakins's day appearances were more easily shattered, but they were reasserted with a less elaborate technique. Eakins was summarily driven out of the academy for violating a recent school ruling when he defiantly removed a loincloth from a male model in front of a class of women students: the scandal multiplied the innuendos his unconventional behavior had already spawned and impeded his career. As a result, though he was an American realist who had no use for modernist absolutes, Eakins found himself more isolated and embattled than most European artists in the cultural vanguard.

Born in Philadelphia to an affluent family, his father a writing master and professional calligrapher, Eakins began his studies at the Pennsylvania Academy. He made the obligatory sojourn to Europe, studied with the famous French academician Jean-Léon Gérôme, and in Spain experienced Velázquez's naturalistic and psychological truth as a revelation. Having remained indifferent to the impressionists' explorations in subjectivity, and rejecting the romantic belief in the artist's superior powers, Eakins returned home with a Renaissance faith in the artistic adherence to nature's laws. He wanted, he had declared in a letter to his father, to paint landscapes where "you can see what o'clock it is," to depict figures that would convey "what they are doing and why they are doing it." He would have spurned his English contemporary Ruskin's notion of sight as moral faculty. Leonardo's motto—*sapere vedere*, know how to see—was closer to his disenchanted, scientific temperament. Eakins did not believe that seeing clearly what was there to be seen was inherently good or bad. He regarded it as a physiological necessity, the essential function of wakefulness as dreaming might be the essential function of sleep.

Eakins's European experience hardened his Yankee resolve. Back in Philadelphia, Eakins eventually became head of the academy and began pushing the French academy's rigorous concentration on anatomy to socially unacceptable extremes. Warming to the camera's new promise of verisimilitude, he used photographs to make scientific studies of motion and snapped shots of his students and himself posing nude—he is probably the only nineteenth-century artist to have preserved on film images of himself in the buff. His dissections of cadavers, his focus on perspective to the exclusion of aesthetic theory, his strictness and sometimes arrogance as a teacher were controversial. But it was especially his intense emphasis on the live nude as an object of study and his insistence on having his female students model nude for himself and for each other that roused concern about his morality. Not least among those who fretted were several of his assistants who coveted his position, as well as the academy trustees who faced a reddening ledger and seemed hankering for an occasion to renege on an earlier promise to double Eakins's salary. A general alarm spread thrillingly through Philadelphia society, and by the time of the loincloth incident, Eakins had become the target of so many rumors and insinuations that some of his women students had to join in the general attack to protect their own reputations. What hurt Eakins most was that the leader of the forces against him was his erstwhile student and now brother-in-law, George Frank Stephens. By all accounts Stephens's jealous hatred of Eakins and vindictive backstabbing approached insanity (he backed down when Eakins's lawyer challenged him and never made his charges public). Yet the accusation that must have devastated the artist came after the suicide of twenty-four-year-old Ella Crowell, Eakins's mentally unstable niece, when years later her family started the rumor that Eakins had seduced her.

Neither that charge nor any of the others was ever proven, but charges kept coming, ranging from lewdness to exhibitionsim. No doubt Eakins, in affirming nakedness as the essence of art-making, divested a provincial American gentility of the pleasing conception it had woven of art as the highest achievement of good manners. In the tumultuous aftermath, people rushed to regain their accustomed attitudes. With his diabolical reputation, Eakins became, in turn, a blank canvas of sorts onto which those who couldn't keep their composure were able to project their worst fears and most fantastic impulses. Yet there is always the possibility, improbable as it was in Eakins's small social world,

BECOME A 1992 ASSOCIATE

COMMONWEAL ASSOCIATES
15 Dutch Street, New York, N.Y. 10038

☐ Benefactors $1,000
☐ Supporters $500
☐ Patrons $250
☐ Charter $125
☐ Sustaining $50
☐ Full Amount enclosed.
☐ Half enclosed; remind me of the balance in 6 months.

(Memberships are tax deductible.)

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the artist did everything his detractors said he did.

The mystery obscuring Eakins's life persists in the mysterious melancholy that haunts his sitters' faces in his powerful late portraits. As his vision evolved, Eakins's symbolism changed in complex ways. Throughout his career, he placed his sitters in the same English-style armchair (on display), with red-velvet upholstery, armrests, and a wooden scroll topping the back. Fourteen years before the scandals began, he painted *Kathrin* (1872), a portrait of his fiancée, who died of meningitis in 1879 before the two could be married. Nearly twenty yeras later, Eakins executed *Miss Amelia Van Buren* (1891), one of his most moving works. Both women are sitting in the celebrated chair. The young Kathrin is leaning to the right, exposing almost the entire back of the chair, while the somewhat older Amelia has shifted herself the same distance to the left. The shadows cupping Kathrin's face partially conceal a shy, self-conscious smile; a naked light discloses Amelia's dispirited gaze. The fan Kathrin holds is completely open; Amelia is barely touching a closed fan that rests in the crumpled folds of her dress. And whereas Kathrin animatedly teases a kitten in her lap with her free hand, Amelia wearily leans her head on hers.

The contrast between the two paintings suggests a clue to the puzzling aspect of many of Eakins's late portraits which are so similar in mood and symbolism to the atmosphere in *Amelia*. The vacant space revealing the back of the chair in Kathrin's portrait just needs to be occupied by the absent lover—until then the kitten will do. Only the decorous back of a proper chair fills the blank expanse in *Amelia*, weighing on the sitter with its gloomy tedium. Kathrin looks down at the kitten; Amelia stares into space. Her gaze is objectless, her body limp, and for Eakins, an artist and amateur scientist who exalted seeing and doing, eyes not fastened on an object and bodies without the potential for movement must have meant a falling away from the liaison between nature and humankind, his modern equivalent of a spiritual crisis.

As Rembrandt—one of Eakins's aesthetic forebears—grew older, and as his suffering ripened, his face in the self-portraits seems wryly heavy with the world's woes. Eakins pressed what he knew about the emotional and psychological consequences of his society's secrets and taboos onto the faces of his subjects. Many of them belonged to a small community of family and friends who loved Eakins and remained loyal to him. Some, like Amelia Van Buren, were devoted former students who had gotten caught up in the scandal that never stopped swirling around the artist; others were patrons like the prominent Catholic clergymen who offered Eakins commissions toward the end of his career (the exhibition includes a forceful portrait of Msgr. James P. Turner, standing in Philadelphia's Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul). But whether his sitters were close to him or not, Eakins often painted them as if they were inwardly borne along on the dim tide of some unappeased wanting, starved by an outer deprivation. In these late portraits the artist's empathy feeds on his outrage, a finely rendered indictment is flung at an oppressive emptiness.

LEE SIEGEL

Lee Siegel, a frequent contributor to Commonweal, *is a freelance writer living in New York.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shaw: behind the public mask

BERNARD SHAW: VOLUME III, 1918-1950
The Lure of Fantasy
Michael Holroyd
Random House, $30, 544 pp.

Mark Patrick Hederman

When Bernard Shaw eventually died after nearly a century of exuberant and much publicized life, he had become something of a myth almost as enduring as his own Methuselah. Just before he passed away an offer came from the United States of a million dollars for one final message. Shaw's reply: "There is nothing more to be said" has been resoundingly contradicted by Michael Holroyd who has spent eighteen years writing the definitive biography in three volumes almost as long as the life they record.

The art of biography is somewhat belittled; its great exponents do not receive the acclaim that is their due. Holroyd's *Lytton Strachey* must be one of the great biographies of all time. Biography here was both a means of expression and the opening of a new and undiscovered world. The exciting combination of this biographer and *The Inca of Jerusalem* (a nickname for Shaw taken from a play of the same title) himself promised to be the wedding of the century. The literary world held its breath for eighteen years, devouring each volume as it emerged and eventually finding that their expectations had been disappointed. There was something *déjà entendu* about the endless yarns and anecdotes. One thousand four hundred and fifty pages of shavian wit was an overdose. Shaw himself had become unfashionable as a playwright. So, the whole spectacular extravaganza seemed *Too True to be Good.*

As entertainment I would agree with this assessment of Holroyd's biography, although parts of it are hilarious (especially the history and rehearsals of *Pygmalion* in volume two). There is something stale and wearisome about Shaw's desperate attempt to turn his life into a virtuoso performance of quotable quotes especially as most of these have become ammunition for a century of bores. Who hasn't heard a thousand times about Winston Churchill and the first night or about the Lady's looks and Bernard's brains!

But beware of Holroyd. He remains one of the great biographers. "This book is a complaint," he has written about his own *Unreceived Opinions*, "a pessimistic, nostalgic and I hope not too rhetorical complaint against the condition imposed on writers by society....As a guide it is intended to be part of an anti-tourist brochure."

His *Shaw* is the definitive biography. Nothing has been left out, everything has been meticulously catalogued and annotated. It is the essential book for libraries and universities. For those who have no intention of reading the book but wish to have the last word on the subject it is the ideal purchase or present. Holroyd is impishly aware of the market value of his product. It presents itself so imperiously who could afford to be without it?

But behind all that, if one is prepared to read the biography, there is the genius of Holroyd, that empathy which never becomes sentimental, that "detachment that stops short of incompatibility" which reveals the mystery of Bernard Shaw. Carlyle discussing Boswell's relationship with Johnson says that it was "not sycophancy, which is the lowest, but reverence, which is the highest of human feelings." This personality-divining empathy is Holroyd's immense gift. It has been Shaw's great luck and ours to have it exercised in his case.

What Holroyd tells is the full and terrifying story of a life lived as a theatrical substitute for the one that was unbearable. Shaw's early existence was so miserable and deprived that he decided to perform a psychic abortion and invent a character who would assume his identity. His genius was something of a cancerous growth out of desolation and dislocation. And this is the reason why the life, for all its flamboyant panache, is fundamentally uninteresting. Shaw abandoned the real challenge early on and created a public mask which was the robot-like substitute.

In volume one Holroyd identifies the time and the circumstances of this psychic suicide. He describes the youthful Shaw as "Sonny," the petname he was called. He shows how and why this timid, sensitive boy was dismembered and replaced by the gargantuan figure of G.B.S. The rest of the biography is forced to trace the blazing trail left so deliberately by Shaw's dramatic production of himself. But, standing in the wings with all the patient perceptivity of his art, Holroyd also traces the fascinating life of the strangled child who never really died but lingered on in Shaw's intestines to provide the real drama and the vital interest in his life. His strange relationships with women, his cruelty and fickleness are shown to be the pathetic disability of a loveless and unlovable boy "unable to come to terms with women except in a make-believe world." His incapacity to write anything as an artist except plays is attributable to the war going on inside himself. Holroyd traces the precise history of this almost accidental emergence of the playwright. He then shows with amazing subtlety how the voice of the semistrangled Sonny appears, in spite of G.B.S.'s attempts to silence it, even in the stage directions of the plays. The most moving and revealing account of this, and one which should be of help to actors and directors, occurs in his analysis of *Pygmalion*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the third volume it is painfully affecting to see how the very unusual admiration which Shaw had for people like T.E. Lawrence and Dame Laurentia of Stanbrook was nourished by this starving child. Holroyd's presentation of *St. Joan* is masterly and shows why she was Shaw's heroine and this was his dramatic masterpiece. In all three of these people Shaw recognized "a version of Sonny." "Shaw was to say that as he wrote, Joan 'guided my hand, and the words came tumbling out at such a speed that my pen rushed across the paper and I could barely write fast enough to put them down.'" Shaw recognized an alter ego in Lawrence who "lacking an adult sense of his identity...invited his heroes to invade his character and associate it with their own, as if gathering from these feats of empathy some nucleus of self-confidence." Insights such as these which permeate this biography make one suspect that just as Boswell's knowledge of Johnson was guided by his inner being, so too Michael Holroyd's knowledge of Shaw is something magically cardiographed from his inner self. This makes him one of the great biographers of all time and this work one of the cleverest disguises ever used to protect as well as reveal the mystery of a life. Give the last word to Shaw: "When you read a biography remember that the truth is never fit for publication." □

WHEN EVERYONE WAS A LIBERAL

POVERTY AND COMPASSION
The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians
Gertrude Himmelfarb
Knopf, $30, 475 pp.

Wilson Carey McWilliams

For centuries, the poor were always with us, a normal and expected feature of the political landscape, until late nineteenth-century reformers redefined poverty as a problem to be ameliorated or solved. We are still at it, fitfully, and the controversies of the late Victorians are family arguments for us, very much at issue in our political life.

Gertrude Himmelfarb has her own ideas, heaven knows, about the proper approach to poverty, and—a good fighter—she brings a special zest to her criticism of various Marxists and partisans of "value free" social science. The grace of Himmelfarb's *Poverty and Compassion*, however, proceeds from her conviction that the past has something to teach the present. No one has a better ear for the late Victorians; she lets us hear them speak in their own voices and on their own terms, and in her writing intellectual history becomes a dialogue between the times.

Himmelfarb's subjects are a gorgeously diverse lot—Charles Booth, a businessman turned researcher and reformer; T.H. Green and John Stuart Mill, theorists who reformulated liberal political philosophy; Alfred Marshall, who aspired to an "economics of chivalry"; the Fabians, Henry George, and the Salvation Army—mostly middle class, all answering to very Victorian consciences and united by an essentially moral sensibility and by faith in the power of ideas.

Events added their own impetus. It was a time of general improvement, as Himmelfarb shows, and although the poor benefited, progress also chipped away at society's excuses for the existence of poverty. Economic growth weakened the plea of scarcity, while science pushed back the boundary of the conceivable. Possibility made duty incandescent: laissez-faire lost moral authority, and reformers hoped for a social science which could add to compassion the discipline, prestige, and force of research and method.

The late Victorian reformers, however, never let form swallow substance: they saw human excellence as the goal of policy, and while they hoped to reduce material want, their higher aim was to secure for the poor a dignified place in civil life. As Himmelfarb observes, the language of morality and the soul belonged (as it still naturally belongs?) to the Left at least as much as to the Right, all the more because the working class shared in the regard for those common decencies we sometimes call "bourgeois." In the logic of laissez-faire, poverty marks some defect of character or ability; the late Victorian reformers, by contrast, saw poverty as the arena of a desperate, often defeated, struggle for propriety, and by so doing, they "remoralized" the poor.

Some of the poor, Charles Booth acknowledged, did suffer from moral "irregularities," and others, victimized by shattered or brutal families, were probably damaged beyond repair. This underclass—Booth called it the "very poor"—would likely be permanently dependent, and the late Victorians generally followed Booth in arguing that it be given relief only under close supervision. The prime concern of the reformers was for those among the poor who possessed at least the foundation of the decencies and who suffered, not from irregular habits, but from irregular and inadequate work. Yet the reformers recognized that, in addition to steady jobs at living wages, the decent poor (and even the comfortable working class) need to be protected against the economic competition and moral laxity of the underclass. And, seeking those necessary supports for moral freedom, the late Victorians came to look toward the state. Most reformers agreed with some version of T.H. Green's argument that liberty is "positive," no mere absence of restraint but the ability to develop one's best self, a teaching that provided a cornerstone for modern liberalism.

But liberalism—and, as Himmelfarb indicates, most of the late Victorians were liberals, whatever they called themselves—is not at ease with judgments about the soul. The very "methodism" of social science, so attractive to Himmelfarb's reformers, encouraged the tendency to follow Seebohm Rowntree in defining poverty in terms of income, distinctions of quantity displacing Booth's hierarchy of qualities. In a similar way, the American "War on Poverty" slipped into an emphasis on income transfers rather than employment, forgetting Michael Harrington's warning

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that poverty is "not an income level but a condition of life." And even when such programs were funded more generously than they are nowadays, they had a tendency to overlook the poor as moral agents.

Late Victorian thinking reminds us that material want is only the most evident and urgent dimension of poverty, and that the poor need help—reproof as well as encouragement—in combatting demoralization and despair. The Victorians also understood that those who receive without being asked to contribute are told that they have nothing but appetites to bring to the table, a conceit that conspires with degradation as it inspires rage. Dignity involves giving as well as getting, and it includes being held to standards and responsibilities which are within reach but stretch the muscles.

It goes without saying that there was also foolishness and error in late Victorian thought, but contemporary liberals—disoriented and not a little demoralized themselves—can benefit from the encounter with their more confident predecessors. And in exploring that past, any reader will be fortunate to have Himmelfarb for a guide. □

WHY PROGRESSIVES LOSE

STRUGGLES FOR JUSTICE
Social Responsibility and the Liberal State
Alan Dawley
Belknap Press of Harvard, $27.95, 526 pp.

Christopher Lasch

The decline of laissez-faire and the rise of the welfare state will necessarily figure prominently in any account of American history that tries to offer a comprehensive view of the years between the Gilded Age and the New Deal. What we make of this familiar story, however, will depend on our reading of more recent events: the ideological attack on the welfare state and its intellectual underpinnings, the revival of neoclassical economics, the rise of the New Right, the worldwide collapse of communism. Unless we see these developments simply as temporary setbacks, minor interruptions in the march of social democracy, we will begin to wonder whether the period covered by Alan Dawley's narrative can be adequately understood as an "age of reform"—Richard Hofstadter's designation for the same period.

Recent events have led some of us to question the social democratic faith in which we were raised. Newly aware of the need for alternatives to the state and the market alike, we are drawn to the study of half-forgotten traditions prematurely discarded in the frenzy of progress and enlightenment. We no longer regard progress and democracy as interchangeable terms. Democratic movements in the past often resisted the ideology of improvement, and this resistance no longer strikes us as irrational or quixotic.

Those who still adhere to the social democratic faith of our fathers, on the other hand, have learned from recent reversals only an exaggerated appreciation of the reactionary forces in American society—the forces of darkness against which progressives have allegedly had to struggle all along. Dismayed by the resurgence of the Right, they look back on the first half of the twentieth century as a series of abortive and ultimately unsuccessful "struggles for justice." From Dawley's point of view, the "forces of movement" have been too weak to prevail against the combined power of corporate capitalism and popular bigotry. The progressive movement and the New Deal took a few "baby steps" toward the establishment of a welfare state, but "enfeeblements and exclusions" rendered these reforms ineffective. The result fell deplorably short of "full-scale state planning," even of an "age of reform."

If Americans grudgingly accepted the welfare state, according to Dawley, it was not because they believed in social justice but because they hungered for security. They clung to "outmoded ideas"—the biblical account of creation, strait-laced sexual morality, "conventional ruling notions of family life." Reformers made little headway against racism, nor could they bring themselves to "disturb gender relations." Since every form of repression rests, at bottom, on the "nuclear family ideal," the failure to demolish it once and for all meant that injustice would continue to flourish. Americans remained largely indifferent to "social responsibility," sealing themselves up in their "isolated private homes." Movements for sexual freedom and women's rights proved just as inconclusive as movements designed to increase the powers of the state over the economy. They had the effect of "taming erotic emotion," just as the welfare state served, in the end, merely "to save liberal capitalism from revolutionary overthrow."

Most of this has been said before, with greater subtlety, by historians who treat the reform tradition as the triumph of "corporate liberalism." The only novelty in Dawley's account—rather a predictable novelty, in view of recent academic trends—is the emphasis on "gender roles" and the attempt to show that sexual and political repression go hand in hand. Thus the Red scare after World War I, as Dawley sees it, was directed not only against the socialist threat to capitalism but against the "ultimate threat [to] the middle-class family." In order to save the family, the same Americans who rejected interference with private property welcomed the state's interference with sexual freedom. Reformers in the Age of Reform were less interested in social democracy than in "social purity." When it came to personal morality, "laissez-faire turned into its opposite, absolutist state control of private life."

Dawley's debunking of the reform tradition, because it is so moralistic and one-sided, may prompt some readers to come to its defense. But it is more important to reexamine the assumptions behind debates concerning "state control of private life." Those debates have reached a dead end. The Left wants to regulate economic activity, the Right wants to regulate morality. On both sides, resistance to state controls is highly selective. Neither side recognizes that such controls are inherently ineffective,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Symposium

**"Contemporary Implications of
The Thought of John Duns Scotus
for Understanding the Nature of the Person,
Free Will, and
Decision-Making in the Private and Public Spheres"**

June 24-28, 1992

Among the speakers:
Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ, Thomas Shannon, Allan Wolter, OFM

Registration $25.00 Rm. and Bd. $100.00 Conference $125.00
Sponsored by The Franciscan Institute and
The Friars Minor of Holy Name Province

For more information write:
The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, New York 14778

whatever their purpose; that formal supervision cannot take the place of the informal understandings that hold a community together; and that a reconstruction of informal social controls, accordingly—the repair of our cultural infrastructure—is a more important goal of public policy than the regulation of activities deemed harmful to the public good. The state is just as ineffective as the market in promoting the public good, unless it rests on casual public trust and on the mediating structures (families, churches, neighborhoods) that encourage trust. In the absence of workable structures of this kind, the state becomes the plaything of rival interest groups. Secure in its privileges, increasingly unresponsive to popular opinion, it loses public support and has to rely more and more on coercion. The public begins to regard it as an alien power, not as the instrument of collective purpose. When the state enjoys so little public confidence, it would be the height of folly to add to its powers, as if a more highly developed form of social engineering could overcome the demoralizing effects of social engineering in a more primitive form.

Historical narratives informed by these perceptions would put more emphasis on the erosion of informal self-government than on the "imbalance of state and society." Social democrats in the Age of Reform (Dawley's ideological ancestors) assumed that large-scale production was historically inevitable because of its superior efficiency, that only reactionaries tried to resist centralization and technological progress, and that economic centralization would lay the groundwork for a centralized state capable of enforcing a more equitable distribution of wealth. But the inevitability of centralization was challenged, both in theory and in practice, by populists, single-taxers, syndicalists, and guild socialists—good democrats, for the most part, who nevertheless remained skeptical about "progress." A narrative structured around the "imbalance of state and society"— around a unilinear conception of history in which a "modernizing," centralizing, and cosmopolitan impulse can be expected to prevail, in the long run, over the residual opposition of the unenlightened—cannot possibly recreate the vitality of public debate in a time when the available possibilities seemed more varied than they seem today.

The structure of Dawley's narrative recalls Parrington and Beard, who shared his conviction that "struggles for justice" pit the forces of light against provincials and reactionaries who want to "turn back the clock," as Dawley puts it. But Parrington and Beard were more confident about the imminent victory of enlightenment and hence more generous to their opponents, whereas Dawley, oppressively aware of the power they can muster (residual and reactionary as it is), gives them no quarter. He lacks the progressive historians' serenity, which tempered their moralizing and made it possible for them to acknowledge virtues even in those who fought on the wrong side of history.

Dawley's moralizing, on the other hand, is relentless and shrill. He seldom misses an opportunity to attribute unworthy motives to people who hold objectionable views, to show his contempt for "conventional opinion," or to add rhetorical flourishes designed to enable dim-witted readers to distinguish the heroes of his story from the villains. Radicals are "committed and toughened," "redoubtable," and "charismatic." They are a "sturdy band" fighting "gamely," often against "incredible odds," for social justice and sexual freedom. They are engaged in a "long march for woman suffrage" and other noble causes. Their writings are "pioneering," "classic"; their ideas take the form of "bold departures." Their preferred form of expression, the "critique" of social conditions, is invariably "vigorous," "scathing," or "withering."

The reactionaries, on the other hand, are a contemptible breed. In the face of change, their initial reaction, "intransigence," gives way to "consternation" and finally to "hysteria." They alternately "rail" and "drone." Their imagination is "super-heated," and their politics can best be described in clinical language: "paranoia," "obsession," "fantasy." They are guilty of "yearning to restore a bygone age." When they are not "spinning webs" of "escapist" fantasy, they are "waving the flag," advancing "hare-brained" schemes for turning back the clock, or simply reciting "small-town verities." Often they speak "euphemistically," never boldly or scathingly or witheringly. Rapid social change leaves them "aghast," and they suffer "fits" and "spasms." Their habitual attitude is "censorious," their habitual pattern of speech a "torrent of moralistic clichés." Their favorite remedy for the nation's ills, needless to say, is "repression." When they suffer defeat—all too rarely, alas!—their defeats are "humiliating."

This kind of thing may inspire the party faithful, but it can't very well pass for historical analysis. It can't even address the obvious question all this abusive rhetoric inadvertently raises, a question that is bound to occur to any open-minded reader who plods through Dawley's relentless disparagement of those who get in the way of progress. If the forces of darkness are such a sorry lot, why do they always seem to be winning? □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CURTAIN GOING UP

FOOLSCAP
Michael Malone
Little, Brown, $19.95, 392 pp.

Paul Elie

Rare is the contemporary novel that has a happy ending. Twentieth-century literature's negative presumptions often let us forget that plots need not end darkly or enigmatically—that once upon a time they generally didn't (see Molière's, say, or many of Dickens's) and that they still don't on Broadway or at the cinema ten-plex. *Foolscap* makes clear that Michael Malone hasn't forgotten. The author of several plays as well as six previous novels, Malone knows drama from Shakespeare to *South Pacific*, and his worldview seems that of a cockeyed optimist. With *Foolscap*, which is about plays and playwrights, he has contrived a spirited comedy that is as innocently entertaining as a movie musical, advancing toward THE END clunkily but happily.

The novel's protagonist is Theo Ryan, a mild-mannered young English Renaissance scholar at Cavendish University, nestled in tiny Rome, North Carolina. Founded by evangelicals to educate a student body that was "male, rural, local, and as sophisticated as a bootlegger's still hidden behind a patch of jimsonweed," the university now hosts purveyors of the latest critical theories; its faculty is divided between old professors for whom "all the world [is] clearly a classroom" and new ones for whom all the world is an international conference on sexuality or textuality.

Theo's claim to academic status is that through his show-biz parents (who raised him in "the church of The-Show-Must-Go-On") he knows the legendary playwright Ford Rexford, who has fled to North Carolina from New York and authorized Theo to write a biography of him. Garrulous, alcoholic, considered washed up by the theatrical establishment, four times married and now engaged a fifth time, Rexford is in every way Theo's opposite. In the great man's presence, Theo, until now a "backstage child," begins to overcome his shyness. He stars in a faculty production of *Guys and Dolls*, then entertains the notion of becoming a famous playwright himself. For he has written a drama called *Foolscap*, in the style of Sir Walter Raleigh; and Rexford, after revising it and devising a new ending, has declared it a masterpiece.

When Rexford goes to London, having abandoned his country-singer fiancée Rhodora for the company of Theo's student Jenny Harte, he takes *Foolscap* with him and leaves his own new play *Principles of Aesthetic Distance*, still unfinished, with Theo. And when Rexford is killed in an auto accident, Theo decides to return Rexford's favor by completing his last work, hoping to restore his reputation as the century's greatest dramatist.

Parts four and five of this five-act novel take place in England, which, incredibly, Theo has never visited before. Prompted by scholar Winifred Throckmorton's theory that there is a "lost" Raleigh play, Theo contrives to have his own *Foolscap* forged onto foolscap and hidden in a crumbling church. The manuscript is discovered, but Theo's ruse is not, and by novel's end he finds himself the husband of Rhodora and the author of two hit plays—Raleigh's in the West End, Rexford's on Broadway—while still enjoying the anonymous role that "God, who is the author of all our tragedies," has appointed him to play.

Foolscap's plot is carefully constructed, and this care extends to the novel's details as well. The name Theo, for example, appropriately evokes both "theatre" and (via God, or *theos*) "author." The parallel between Theo's backstage childhood and his unseen efforts as a collaborator and forger is skillfully spelled out. The stage-direction-like chapter titles and quotations

NOW IN PAPERBACK

The
CHRISTIAN TRADITION
A History of the Development of Doctrine, Volume 5
Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)
JAROSLAV PELIKAN

With the publication of this final volume, Jaroslav Pelikan's masterful series is available in paperback.

"This volume, like the series which it brings to a triumphant conclusion, may be unreservedly recommended as the best one-stop introduction currently available to its subject."—Alister E. McGrath, *Times Higher Education Supplement*

"Not only the end of a dazzling scholarly effort but the end of an era as well. There is reason to suppose that nothing quite like it will be tried again."—Harvey Cox, *Washington Post Book World*

"[A] marvellous work."—*The Economist*

Volume 5 $13.95
Also in paperback: Volume 1 $13.95; Volume 2 $12.95; Volume 3 $12.95; Volume 4 $14.95

The University of Chicago Press
At bookstores or, for MC/VISA orders, call: 1-800-621-2736. In Illinois: 312-568-1550

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from great plays that head each chapter are erudition lightly employed, buoying the novel rather than bogging it down.

The novel falters, however, when Malone must move beyond such devices to do the subtler work of characterization, thematic development, and the like. In the satire of Cavendish University that dominates the novel early on, he gives us stereotypical ideologues—strident black feminist, swinging Oxbridge Marxist, liberal female chaplain—without providing any surprises. And his distaste for these people seems not to be grounded in any principle deeper than a wariness of all things trendy. (Even if his distaste were principled, he probably wouldn't weigh in with wicked satire—he seems too nice a guy.)

Banal as the resulting comedy is, it's fairly harmless, since Malone aims chiefly to entertain, and for some readers there is nothing more entertaining than finding their own opinions sarcastically confirmed. But Malone's reliance on easy caricature keeps him from developing the themes on which his plot is founded. Though he means to create a contrast between trendy contemporary ideologues, who kill art with theory, and great-souled literary throwbacks like Theo and Rexford (and himself, presumably), who give art life and draw life from it, the enemy is so thinly sketched that the contrast never quite emerges.

Such paucity of characterization also mars the novel's central figures, its protagonist above all. Malone intends to establish Theo Ryan as an alarmingly passive young man, then bring him to vigorous life. Surprisingly, though, this expert in drama is unable to stage a single scene in which Theo seems to act independent of his creator. Instead, Malone windily builds up to climactic moments that never arrive, crowding out his protagonist with pithy comments about situations we never really see—Theo's therapy sessions, or his lame romantic pursuit of the college chaplain, or his longstanding feud with Peter Sellars-like director Scottie Smith, who "dressed like no other director before him, except possibly Sarah Bernhardt...white knee pants, and a quilted black jacket as iridescent as an oil spill."

In consequence, the novel's life is to be found only in it's author's noisy, irrepressible telling of the story. Malone is clever, delighted with his cleverness, and gambling that his delight will stir the reader as much as it has the writer. Though it is a novel about timeless truths and their contemporary debasement, ultimately *Foolscap* stands or falls not on the verities of plot and character and theme but on the degree to which we find its authorial voice entertaining. Just like... well, a trendy contemporary novel. □

SOLIDARITY IN THE KITCHEN

UNQUIET DAYS
At Home in Poland
Thomas Swick
Ticknor & Fields, $19.95, 286 pp.

Christopher A. Shannon

"I first went to Warsaw in the fall, that season of sullen skies and sorrowful anniversaries that the Poles call golden." So opens *Unquiet Days*, Thomas Swick's lively and engrossing account of two years in Poland. Led east by a romance with his future Polish wife, Swick settles in Warsaw for a stint teaching English.

As a resident from September 1980 to September 1982, Swick witnessed some of the headiest events in contemporary Polish history. The birth of Solidarity and its radicalizing effects are portrayed through the actions of his colleagues and students at the English Language College. The faculty room is unionized, students march, protest, and are frequently interned. Martial law descends.

Swick's detailed observations of his in-laws and friends make the book a success. Rather than attempting a sweeping analysis of the events and figures of 1980-81—for which readers should turn to *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, by Timothy Garton Ash—Swick relies on his day-to-day experiences and conversations to describe the excitement, rumors, and deprivations endured by ordinary citizens. The problems of emigration and "brain-drain" are enlivened with tales of unfaithful boyfriends fleeing abroad, and whispered pleas for an invitation stateside. Students baldly cheat on exams as if "the fact that the system is itself corrupt seems to exonerate them, to make their corrupt actions right." Instead of Solidarity's birth in the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, we are given a glimpse into Aunt Janusia's apartment, where Swick and his family gather on the "Great Monday" after Easter to hear the first underground radio broadcast under martial law. Like millions of other Varsovians, they flicked their lights three times in breathless excitement as a clandestine figure gave voice to their aspirations across the airwaves.

"At Home in Poland," the subtitle of the book, is slightly deceiving. Warsaw, Warszawa, Warschau, Varsovie, "the Thermoplyae of Poland," has suffered partitions, wars, occupations, and uprisings since its emergence as the capital in 1596. In 1980, the memory of the German occupation still hung tenebrous and fearful in the minds of older residents. Yet amidst the gloom, Swick explored his new city with all the vigor of a happy new arrival. He roamed the shabby streets and empty shops in the rain, stood stomping his feet in the snow as a decrepit trolley chugged toward him, then ducked into hotels for a reviving dose of Western materialism.

All of this is relayed in crisp and evocative writing, and the reader is transported with great skill and dexterity to a Warsaw of depressing shortages and spirited citizens.

Two years is an ideal period to learn a city, to delve into its back streets and to become familiar with its personality, yet short enough so that one does not lose a critical detachment. Swick is an engaging reporter, and his eye catches the intriguing categories of the 1857 census, "4,008 wags...and 2,642 people who could be great, if not for this and that," as well as the reconstruction of Warsaw's Old Town

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Become a Commonweal Associate

and its beautiful cathedral.

His new wife and supportive relatives and colleagues were clearly a boon, and Swick is able to devote much of his energies to domestic details long hidden from Western eyes. The author and his wife Hania lived with her guardian, a family friend named Jadzia, and her daughter, Gosia. With Swick we slather extra helpings of horseradish on matzo crackers to fortify ourselves against hunger, or slug back bottles of "cola, called, helpfully, Brown." Especially enchanting are the little victories his hosts achieve as they secure a traditional meal for Christmas, triumphing at last over the endless queues or gladly expending their sugar rations for a holiday pastry.

If cooking and the kitchen demonstrated some of the uses of adversity, it was with religion and the church that Poles sought comfort and succor. Swick describes several religious scenes with exquisite care and emotion. His first Midnight Mass in St. John's Cathedral is such an event; a Christmas unsullied by commercialism and lachrymose good cheer is also an intensely spiritual one.

In the latter portion of the book Swick embarks on the annual pilgrimage to Jasna Gora to see the Black Madonna, Poland's most sacred symbol of unity and faith. Begun by the Paulines in 1711, this nine-day rite of passage from Warsaw to Czestochowa is as much a nationalistic and patriotic event as a religious one. Swick's pilgrimage in August 1982 is the six-hundredth anniversary of the Black Madonna's arrival in Poland and the first to occur under martial law. Eighty pages is a substantial number to devote to a long hike in the countryside, yet Swick inexorably draws us along. When Swick sees the tower of Jasna Gora jutting into the sky and begins the final march through the city, one of thousands chanting the rosary, we share his exultation completely.

Unquiet Days is a readable and enlightening account of a people and a place about which Americans know little. As the citizens of the former Soviet bloc grapple with their new-found freedoms, other young Western writers will explore these largely uncharted territories. Swick has set a high standard for his successors to follow. □

REVIEWERS

MARK PATRICK HEDERMAN *is a visiting professor from Ireland at Boston University where he teaches English and Irish literature in the Irish Studies Program. He was for ten years coeditor of* The Crane Bag Journal of Irish Studies.

WILSON CAREY McWILLIAMS *teaches political science at Rutgers University.*

CHRISTOPHER LASCH *teaches history at the University of Rochester. His most recent book is* The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics *(Norton).*

PAUL ELIE *is writing a collection of short stories.*

CHRISTOPHER A. SHANNON, *a graduate of Boston University, will be entering law school this fall.*

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *writes the religious booknotes for this journal and teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

ECO-JUSTICE AND THEOLOGY

AFTER NATURE'S REVOLT
Eco-Justice and Theology
Edited by DIETER T. HESSEL
Introduced by Hessel's clear assessment of specific environmental perils, the contributions to this volume underscore the urgent need for a fundamental reassessment of Western assumptions and patterns, and a faith-based ethic, which must critique Christian theology's own anthropocentrism.
$14.95 paper

FROM APOCALYPSE TO GENESIS
Ecology, Feminism, and Christianity
ANNE PRIMAVESI
Primavesi's radical assessment of the ecological challenge leads her to find in Genesis a basis for a profound rethinking of Sin and Redemption.
$14.95 paper

THE TRAVAIL OF NATURE
The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology
H. PAUL SANTMIRE
"For anyone, agnostic or religious, who wants to understand public attitudes toward ecology and how the...force of religion in America may continue to shape them..."
—LYNN WHITE, JR.
$16.95 paper

GOD THE ECONOMIST
The Doctrine of God and Political Economy
M. DOUGLAS MEEKS
"...brilliantly written...Douglas Meeks has succeeded in breaking through to a new dimension of theology."—JÜRGEN MOLTMANN
$12.95 paper

MODELS OF GOD
Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age
SALLIE McFAGUE
"This is first and foremost a work of constructive theology. It should be included in seminary and graduate courses on systematic theology."—RICHARD BUSSE
$10.95 paper

REVELATION
Vision of a Just World
ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA
Fiorenza recognizes not only the ideological distortions but also the socio-political location of the Apocalypse. In this way she opens to the reader the world of vision of this powerful New Testament book.
$9.95 paper

THE WINDOW OF VULNERABILITY
A Political Spirituality
DOROTHEE SOELLE
Soelle critiques a Western culture she sees as suicidal in its militarism and murderous in its environmental destruction. With ironic wisdom, she envisions a new culture of vulnerability, grounded in faith as resistance and "saturated with a deep love of life."
$8.95 paper

At bookstores or from
FORTRESS PRESS
426 South Fifth Street
Box 1209
Minneapolis, MN 55440
1-800-328-4648

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WEEP NOT FOR THE SYLLOGISM

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
Roman Catholic Perspectives (2 vols.)
Edited by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza & John P. Galvin
Fortress, $24.95 each volume, Vol. I, 336 pp.; Vol. II, 384 pp.

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Occasionally a book appears which seems just right for the present moment. Fiorenza's and Galvin's well-thought-out collection of theological essays is such a work. We are now just a generation away from the closing of Vatican Council II. That event triggered a great wave of theological creativity within the Roman Catholic church, fueled not only by the conciliar debates themselves but by the earlier efforts of biblical and patristic scholars who recovered forgotten (or suppressed) theological veins; and, subsequent to the council, by more intense ecumenical contacts both for instrumental (e.g., various church dialogues) and for scholarly reasons. The net result of this renewal has been an almost unmanageable amount of theological literature that ranges from the highly philosophical and technical work of the university theologians to the more praxis-oriented labors on the liberationist spectrum.

The question that haunts the diligent theologian is this: is there a coherence in all of this creativity and, following on that, how do all of these ramified theological concerns find their place in the historic Roman Catholic theological tradition? Fiorenza's and Galvin's collection of essays is meant to address both of those issues. What they, and their fellow contributors, have produced, with varying degrees of success, is a kind of *status questionis* of contemporary Catholic theology.

My strong suspicion is that these volumes will gain wide acceptance in the arena of theological education in the English-speaking world. It is a sign of the ecumenical maturity of this age that the idea for the volume came from the late John Hollar who was, until his untimely death, a senior editor for Fortress Press (Lutheran). It is a worthy tribute to his vision and fitting that the editors should have dedicated their labors to his memory.

The organization of the book, as we shall see, follows rather closely the traditional divisions of the scholastic tradition but, apart from those divisions, what is abundantly clear is that the treatment of topics has totally scrapped the methodology of the old theological manuals. Gone is the syllogistic style of argument and very much present is both a range of philosophical methods and hermeneutical strategies as well as a heavy emphasis on historical development from the scriptural sources through the subsequent tradition of theology.

Volume 1 treats some foundational issues in systematic theology: the tasks and methods of theology (Fiorenza); faith and revelation (Dulles); the doctrine of God (Tracy) and the Trinity (LaCugna); Creation (Anne Clifford); and Christology (Galvin). Fiorenza's essay should be required reading for every student in theology. He not only provides us with a synoptic view of theology as it developed historically, but an overview of contemporary approaches to theology and the tasks ahead. Dulles is on familiar ground as he recapitulates work that he has published over the years on revelation. David Tracy's essay on God is curious in the sense that the base line of his argument is that a separate treatment of God does not do justice to the central insight of the Catholic tradition's insistence that God is triune. Hence, his thesis is that we ought not follow the old manual distinction of treating *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino* as separate subjects. His essay, then, becomes, as it were, a prolegomenon to Catherine La Cugna's masterful survey of trinitarian theology—a survey which is, briefly, a summary of her long awaited book on the subject (to appear this coming year). I especially liked LaCugna's generous use of both liturgical and Eastern Orthodox sources which gives her work an authentically catholic wholeness. Anne Clifford's treatment of creation surveys the older theological tradition on the subject (which is a lot more complex than the conventional wisdom would allow) and assays current theological discussions about creation in the light of contemporary science. The different attitudes toward this relationship are various but Clifford wrestles them, in a nonreductionist fashion, into manageable paradigms while pointing to areas where theology might engage ecological issues. Galvin's contribution on Christology is long and thorough with a compact survey of contemporary scriptural scholarship and a readable (no mean feat!) short history of the evolution of Christology as it leads up to Chalcedon. To Rahner's famous query as to whether there is Christology after Chalcedon, Galvin's answer would be in the affirmative as he traces the spectrum of Christologies presented by Rahner himself, by Schillebeeckx, Küng, and liberationists like Sobrino, Reuther, and others to demonstrate that Christology has moved beyond, but is still in dialogue with, Chalcedonian orthodoxy.

Volume 2 opens with a long essay on the church by Michael Fahey which puts its main emphasis on those contemporary problems which most command the attention of theologians. There are so many issues, largely shaped by the demands of ecumenism, connected to ecclesiology (e.g., the episcopacy; the papal ministry; the magisterium; etc.) that one understands, even though one laments, no historical treatment of ecclesiology after the Council of Nicaea. As a bridge to the very fine essay on the sacraments by Regis Duffy, there are studies of sin and grace (Roger Haight) and Mary and the saints (Elizabeth Johnson), all three of which, having profound ecclesiological implications, flow not unnaturally from the treatment of the church that begins the second volume.

Duffy's comprehensive general essay on the sacraments is followed by a consideration of the seven sacraments (done by himself, David Powers, and Fiorenza). Those studies are excellent examples of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the convergence of liturgics, historical theology, and newer approaches to studies in ritual, cultural anthropology, and symbolism. Monika Hellwig's relatively brief, but well-done, essay on eschatology (like the traditional *De Novissimis*) concludes volume 2.

What is to be said about the work in general? As a general observation, one judges these essays to be careful, mainstream, and, in the best sense of the word, conservative works. The authors uniformly are sensitive to the unfolding of the Catholic tradition with generous attention paid both to the more traditional expressions of contemporary theological reflection (e.g., Kasper, von Balthasar, Ratzinger) and the more adventuresome ones. What is startlingly clear is how central the thought of the late Karl Rahner is on a wide spectrum of issues.

Those of us who labor in the classroom will benefit from this work in that one could hand out an individual essay, say, on the sacraments as a general survey before looking at other sources for a more detailed study of this or that problem. The presumed readership is a religiously literate one since the work is so unabashedly theological; it is not catechesis. For that reason one would expect those who want a short course on Catholic theology (e.g., those in the ministry) as a refresher or as an "updating" would find this work of great value.

The fact that the editors evidently demanded a certain uniformity of approach (i.e., introduction; historical considerations; current theological reflections) and received a fair amount of compliance, allows the diligent reader to compare the single essays on methodological issues as well as historical ones. One conclusion that comes from such a comparison is proof of Bernard Lonergan's conviction that the greatest impact on the doing of theology today rests in the shift from atemporal classical reflection to a deeper appreciation of history and historically conditioned speech.

With over seven hundred pages of text it seems ungenerous to criticize the work for omissions but, in fact, there are some conspicuous lacunae (are they a result of the somewhat stodgy divisions of subjects?) in the work. There is no sustained reflection on the relationship of theology to culture nor do the authors stray much out of the Eurocentric circle of theological reflection. As a consequence of this somewhat tight focus, I discovered little on the problem of inculturation of the gospel; less on the theological implication of the coming of what Rahner has called the World Church (*Weltkirche*); and only sidelong glances at the much discussed question of the universality of salvation in Christ in terms of the reflections being adumbrated by those engaged in comparative theology.

It may well be (I can only guess at the editors' intentions) that issues of inculturation and the like are too far from anything approaching consensus to have been considered but I did feel that many of the issues considered in these volumes seemed too hermetically sealed off from the larger world of cultural discourse. But this is a work aimed unabashedly at the church and the theological academy and it should be received with gratitude. It is a most useful and timely work. □

CLASSIFIED

RATES: 80¢ a word, one time; 76¢ three times; 72¢ six times; Classified payable with order; monthly in advance for more than three times. COMMONWEAL, 15 Dutch St., NYC 10038.

Biblical Institute

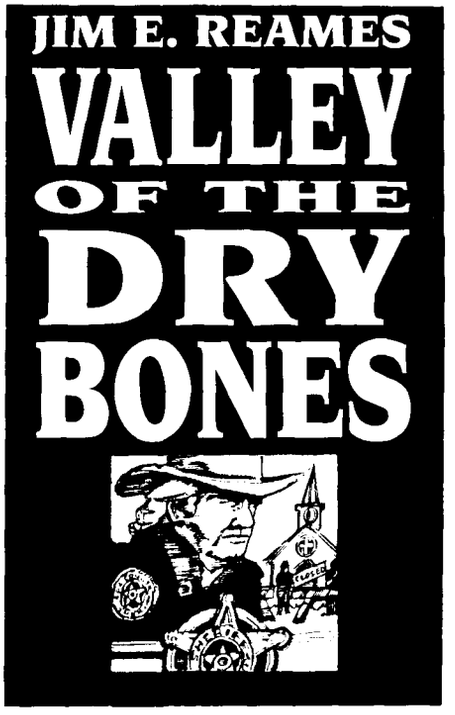
Second Annual Ecumenical Biblical Institute: June 21-26, 1992, Rosemont College, Rosemont, PA. Lecturers: Paul J. Achtemeier, I Peter; Elizabeth Achtemeier, What's the Bible All About; Rev. Frank J. Matera, Gospel of Luke; William L. Holladay, Psalms Through Three Thousand Years. Write: Brother Lewis Mullin, FSC, Director of Biblical Institute, Rosemont College, Rosemont, PA 19010. (215) 688-7610.

Alternatives to Violence

Study nonviolence: its theories, methods, and successes. Eight-lesson home study correspondence course. Readings from Gandhi, Day, Tolstoy, Muste, and other peacemakers. Center for Teaching Peace, 4501 Van Ness St., NW, Washington, DC 20016.

Priesthood

DESIRE PRIESTHOOD? Committed? Call 1-800-633-2252, or write Mater Dei Institute, East 405 Sinto, Spokane 99202.



A story of extreme faith in extreme drought.

WILL BIG GOVERNMENT DESTROY AMERICA?

WILL AMERICA BECOME A POLICE STATE?

READ "VALLEY OF THE DRY BONES."

Believable! Frightening! Possible! Exciting!

FROM THE DESK OF
JIM E. REAMES
ex-deputy sheriff

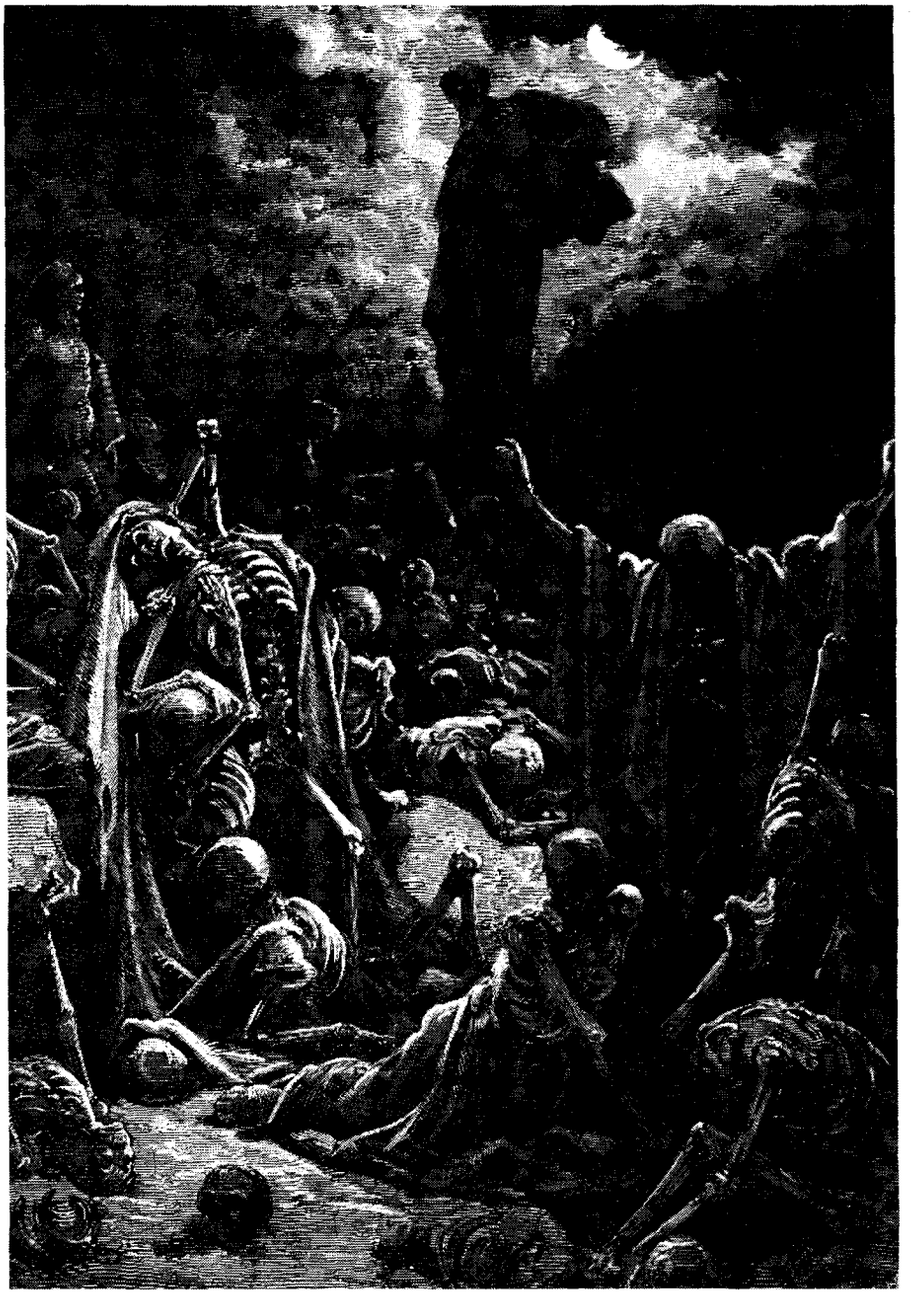
Today . . ., an Internationally known businessman and (author) of fiction novels.

THE WORD FARM
P.O. Box 56
Caldwell, Idaho 83606-0056
Call: 1-800-554-4071
Voice Mail: (208) 459-3342
Fax: (208) 459-9677

• *Bookstore price $24.95, special pre-publication price $19.95*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DAMNATION JUST ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE



Current discussions about young Catholics suggest that Catholic leaders are less concerned with our welfare than with the well-being of the church generally. This is a natural consequence of the Second Vatican Council's revised understanding of the church, and its corresponding revision of the nature of salvation. If you see the church chiefly as the body of its people, and not chiefly as, say, a divine agency appointed by God to do his saving work on earth, your in-house evangelizing efforts will be less menacing but also somewhat less compelling.... Your sense that Catholicism isn't taking hold on the younger end leads you to think not of souls lost for eternity, but of the church losing its vigor in the here and now. Because you can't get all that worked up about young people going to hell, you mostly worry that if you fail to sponsor a Catholic identity in them, the religion you've known will go out of this corner of the world, and the kids will have missed out on something grand.

—Paul Elie,
"On Young Catholics & the Church"
Commonweal, September 27, 1991

COMMONWEAL

15 Dutch Street, New York, N.Y. 10038
Trial subscription offer: 11 issues for $12.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

☐ **I prefer a full year's subscription at $36.**

2/14/92

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED